

# Policy Brief: The added-value of insects as food and feed in the EU

May 2023

*ValuSect aims to strengthen the development of insect-based products in North-West Europe. The success of introducing entomophagy in Western societies strongly depends on legislation. This policy brief provides responses to key questions in relation to the introduction of insects as food and feed on the EU market, as they were expressed by the European Commission in written answers to Members of the Parliament.*

## 1. Insects sold in the EU market are safe for human consumption

The European Union guarantees a high level of health protection to consumers. This is ensured by an obligation, for all food business operators, to apply for [authorisation of all novel foods on the European Single Market](#). In this context, only novel food whose safety for human consumption has been confirmed by the European Food Safety Agency (EFSA) can be authorised for placing on the EU market.

Rules governing the authorisation of novel foods are harmonised at European level, which guarantees a very high level of food safety and minimises the risks of legal gaps between Member States and the Single Market. Authorisations granted to food processors come with strict specifications and conditions of use for the placement on the market of the foodstuff. When assessing the authorisation, EFSA investigates on microbiological, chemical and environmental risks arising from both production and consumption of the novel food in question. It should be noted that, in the area of food safety, strong technical and scientific evidence is of the utmost importance when taking decisions.

Any novel food application submitted from March 27, 2023, is now made available to the public, subject to confidentiality rules. Any supporting documentation is also available on the [EFSA website](#).

Furthermore, the EU is continuously funding research conducted on any remaining uncertainty towards allergenic potential of insects, via the Horizon Europe Framework Programme (the projects [GiantLeap](#), amongst others). So far, studies have shown that the epidemiological evidence on the potential of insects to provoke allergic reactions when insects are consumed is limited and equivocal.

## 2. Consumers are dully informed on insects-based products

[Regulation \(EU\) 1169/2011](#) regulates labelling requirements for food products, as well as information to consumers, within the EU Single Market. It provides the basis for a high level of consumer protection in this regard.

For any food product, the indication of the entire list of ingredients (which includes the specific name of the insects included in the recipe of insect-based products and ingredients), is mandatory on the

packaging. Clear legibility is compulsory, including font size, the use of conspicuous space to be easily visible, and indelible ink. The legal name of the insect needs to be used, which means that the food processors will have to use the Latin (scientific) name of the insect, followed by its common name in brackets. In addition, the law mandates to add a statement indicating possible cause of allergic reaction on the label.

Besides, the European Commission encourages food business operators to facilitate access to food information, including food labels in braille, for example.

For these reasons the European Commission it is not considering the use of an additional and specific label for the use of insect-based ingredients in foodstuffs. It considers that consumers are already satisfactorily informed about contents of their foods.

### **3. The marketing of insects contributes to the self-sufficiency of the European food system**

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As a [number of studies](#) have shown, food availability is currently not at stake in the EU, which demonstrates the resilience of the European food system. Yet, it should be noted that the resilience of the food system is also assessed thanks to its flexibility and capacity to embrace new changes, like the introduction of insect-based food and feed. The promotion of insect-based feed also contributes to reducing the dependence of farmed animals towards critical feed materials, which are typically imported from third countries as well. It also strengthens the development of a circular, bio-based economy, which is a testimony of a strong European food system. Therefore, the introduction of insect-based food and feed on the European market can be an efficient tool in strengthening food sovereignty and the competitiveness of the European food system.

The Interreg North-West-Europe project, [ValuSect](#), aims at enhancing the development of insect-based food products in the EU, via transnational cooperation and transfer of knowledge towards enterprises and actors from the European supply chain. While the European sector of insect-based food production is not yet as developed as other non-European sectors, the role of ValuSect is precisely to promote a European production and distribution of food and feed insect proteins.

### **4. Insect production is sustainable**

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A [number of studies](#) have all demonstrated the need for a real transformation of our food systems, both at EU and global level. This momentum for new and sustainable food consumption patterns are embodied in the [Farm To Fork strategy](#). The consumption of insect-based food takes an integral part in this conversion, by promoting another optional alternative to animal proteins. Insects also contribute to achieve a circular bio-based economy, by producing food and feed proteins in a sustainable way.

In this context, insect farming will be seen as part of possible actions aimed at enhancing the utilisation of more sustainable feed resources for farmed animals. With the intention to reduce feed producers' reliance on critical feed materials, often deemed unsustainable or expensive; the

promotion of insect-based feed encourages the use of alternative protein ingredients, in line with the [Green Claims Initiative](#), and the [Strategic Guidelines for More Sustainable and Competitive EU Aquaculture 2021-2037](#).

While insect production has many environmental benefits, EFSA has not yet assessed the environmental risks presented by the integration of insect-based food or feed to the Single Market. However, two projects, [Susinchain](#) (funded by Horizon2020) and [GiantLeaps](#) (funded by Horizon Europe) are analysing the sustainable aspects associated with the use of insects as food. A special request to EFSA to assess more specifically the role of insects within the Green Deal could be considered.

## 5. Insects are a real asset for feed

Insects have already been [authorised in aquaculture](#), as part of the [Green Claims Initiative](#) and the [Farm To Fork strategy](#). The EU intends to create an environmental footprint in animal production, with clear disclosure and labelling of environmental performance for various feeds.

The European Commission has disclosed that it is currently considering allowing the possibility to use insect proteins in feed for other animal species. Discussions at technical level in this regard have started at technical level with Member States. The authorisations should not discriminate between farming systems.

In addition to sustainable assets, the introduction of insect-based feed on the European market should have economic effects, by lowering feed prices and thus incentivise the production of fish, milk and meat in the EU.

It should however be noted that there remains a prohibition to feed certain former food and catering waste to insects in the European Union.

The European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) is susceptible to support operations regarding insect-based feed, as it was decided in the multiannual financial network (MFN). Member States remain the ones responsible to decide on criteria for activities to be financially supported.

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