

"YOU WANT TO CALL YOURSELF MEAT?"

Beef Industry Representatives' Perceptions on Cultured Meat Products



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01 INTRODUCTION

- Some consumers have switched to alternative protein sources due to health, environment, sustainability, and animal welfare concerns (Verbeke et al., 2015).
- Cultured meat, a future alternative, is created by taking a small number of cells from a living animal and then cultivating those cells in a controlled, lab environment to create food (FSIS, 2022). Consumers have prioritize transparent labeling, stringent regulations as well as supplemental information about cultured meat products (Verbeke et al., 2015).

02 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- The public information model focuses on the one-way communication between an organization and their publics. However, there is limited research on agricultural organizations using this model to communicate with producers.
- This model is popular among government agencies, associations, nonprofits and educational organizations. Practitioners often act on behalf of an organization to disseminate true, timely information to their stakeholders through press, media, and consumer relations (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

03 METHODOLOGY

- Four, qualitative, semi-structured interviews occurred during March and April 2022. The four participants were employed in both state and national beef organizations and served in roles focusing on communications, producer relations, and governmental affairs.
- The interview guide covered topics such as experience in the livestock and agricultural industries, perceptions on plant-based protein and cultured meat alternatives and consumer choices. Then, participants were asked to describe potential impacts on policy, focusing on labeling and regulation.

05 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Industry organizations often act as the bridge between consumers and agricultural producers. The public information model can be used to explain how organizations communicate with their chosen publics on issues (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).
- Organizations should consider using the public information model to inform publics about cultured meat, as well as promote policies regarding transparent labeling and stringent regulation of cultured meat products.
- Further research should be conducted on the perceptions of cultured meat products among producers, policymakers, and nutritionists (Specht et al., 2020; Stollar et al., 2022; Verbeke et al., 2015).
- Conducting a longitudinal study should also be considered in order to describe how trends and opinions change throughout time, particularly once cultured meat products become available.

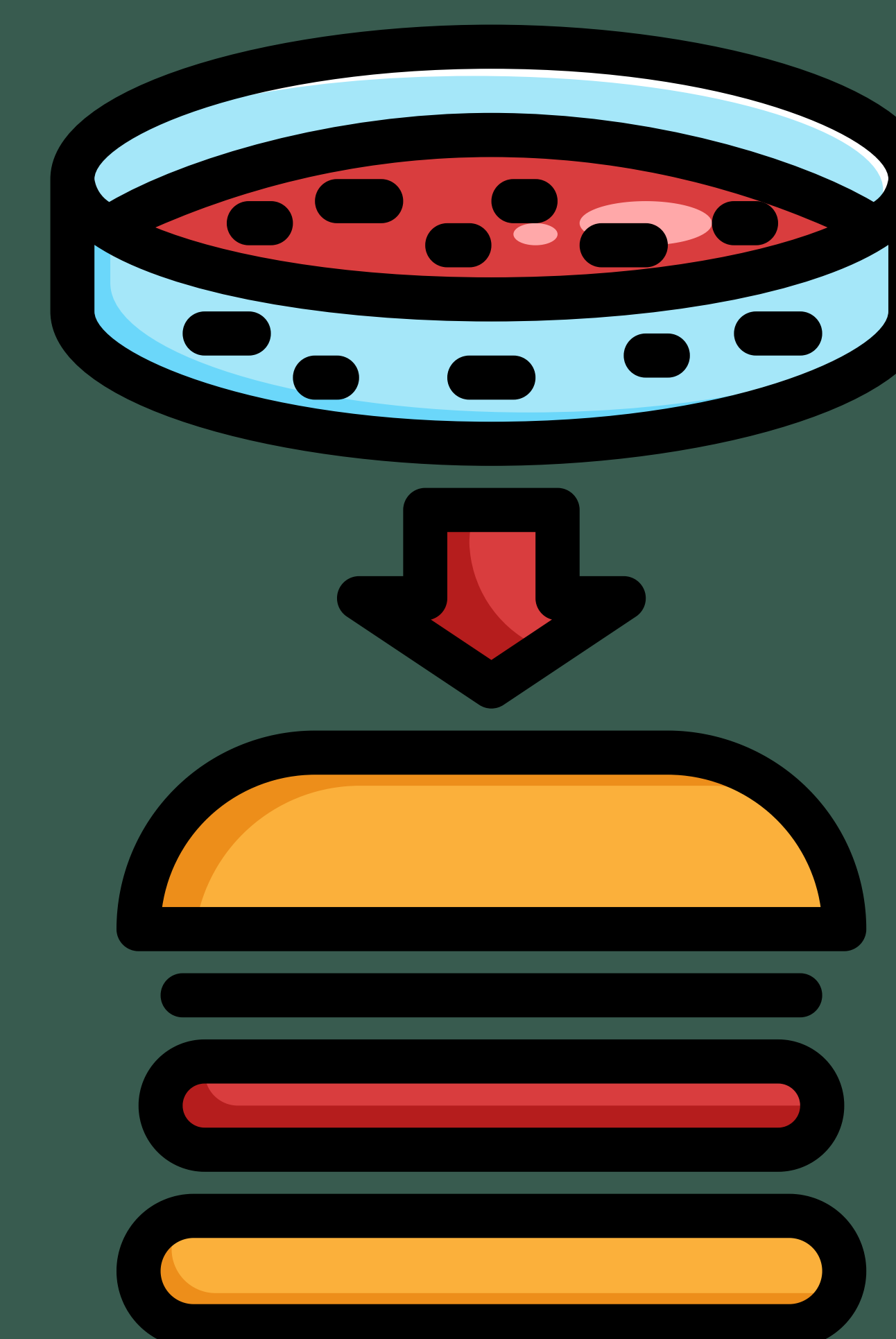
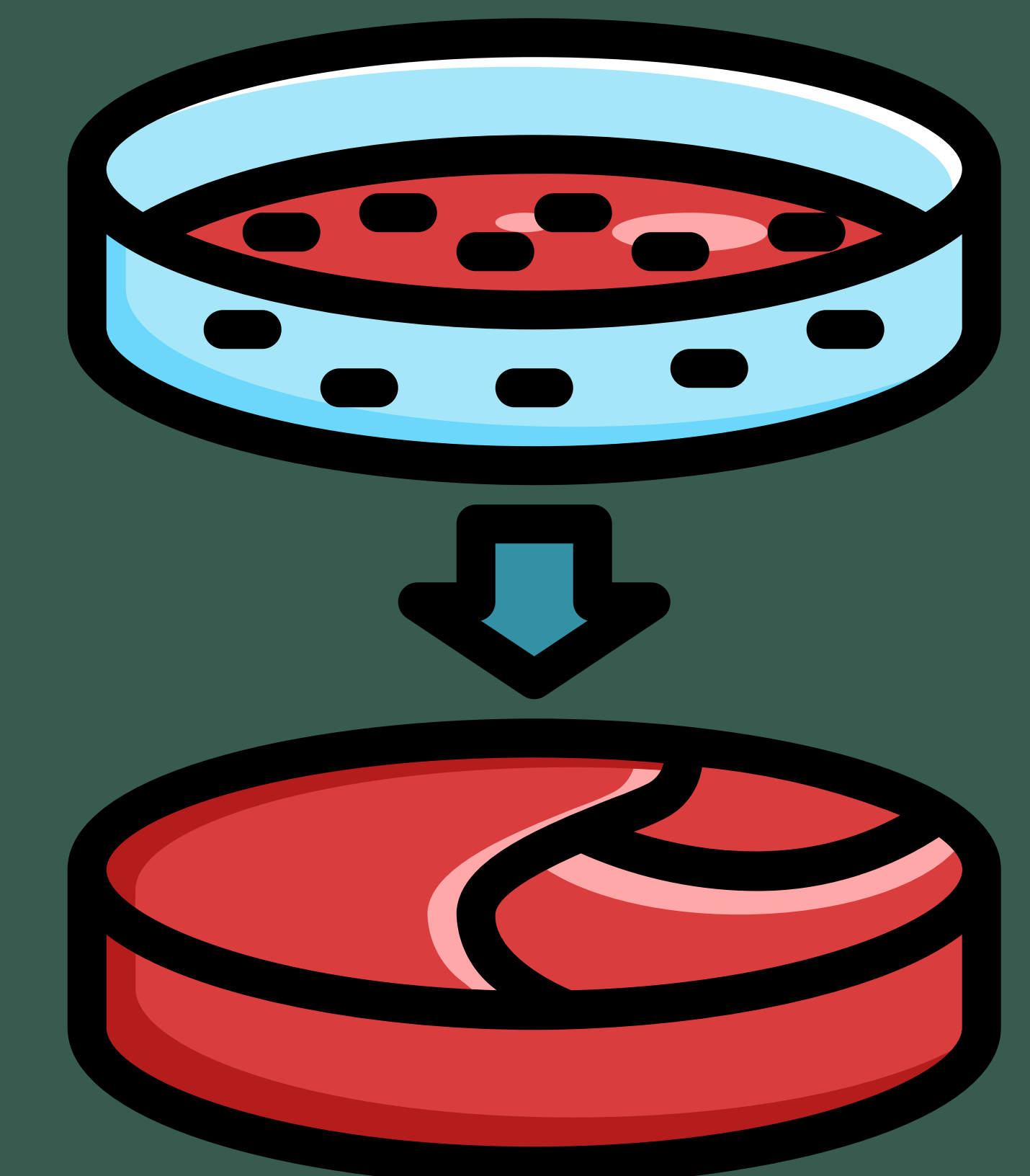
04 FINDINGS

Policy concerns were one of the more prominent themes that emerged from this research. Participants were asked to discuss any policies they would like to see be carried out regarding cultured meat. This led to the development of two subthemes: labeling and regulatory concerns.

REGULATORY CONCERNS

Participant 1 said: "So, from our perspective, **USDA just needs to be involved in the oversight of the inspection and labeling of these products**, whether they're plant-based or cell cultured... I think it's obvious, surely that, cell cultured meat products, since they are derived from animals would be under USDA... **We would like to see USDA be more involved in that oversight, because right now, FDA is just not doing the job.**"

Participant 3 said: "If you want to call yourselves meat, if you're allegedly, equivalent in terms of product composition, you would theoretically be subject to the same types of food safety vulnerabilities. **You need to be held to the same set of stringent food safety standards, and you need to be complying with the same type of labeling processes.**"



PROPER LABELING

Participant 2: "[Cultured meat] **needs to be clearly labeled and potentially sectioned off** in the grocery store. here are your traditionally raised beef products, and then here are your cultured meat products."

Participant 4: "There should be a **label at the bottom** that says, '**produced using cell cultured or cell-based technology**'... Frankly, we don't care as long as it's not labeled beef... As long as that label very clearly differentiates how the food was produced."

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