



EFFCA/15/09

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Definition of Food Cultures

Food Cultures (FC) are safe¹ live bacteria, yeasts or moulds used in food production which are in themselves a characteristic food ingredient. FC preparations are formulations, consisting of concentrates (> 10⁸ CFU/g or ml) of one or more live and active microbial species and/or strains, including unavoidable metabolites and media components carried over from the fermentation and components (e.g. carbohydrates, organic acids, minerals, vitamins) which are necessary for their survival, storage and to facilitate their application in the food.

FC includes, but is not limited to the terms: starter cultures, dairy starter, yogurt starters, ripening cultures, meat cultures, sausage starter, protective cultures, wine cultures, malolactic cultures, sourdough starter, probiotics, lactic acid bacteria etc.

FC preparations are traditionally used as food ingredients at one or more stages in the food manufacturing process to develop their desired metabolic activity. They contribute to one or multiple unique properties of food especially in regard to flavour, colour, texture, wholesomeness, health and nutritional benefits and food safety through protection and conservation.

Labelling of food with FC

Regulation (EU) 1169/2011 provides the information which shall be included in the labelling of all foods, in particular giving the exact nature and characteristics of the product which enables the consumer to choose in full knowledge of the facts.

As FCs are defined as characteristic food ingredients, they should be listed on the ingredient label of the final food when they are used in the manufacture or preparation of a foodstuff, unless exempted by another regulation. FC must be in the list of ingredients under a generally understood category name or in certain cases the specific species and/or strain name. According to Article 19 1(d) of Regulation 1169/2011 cheese, butter, fermented milk and cream are exempted from carrying a list of ingredients if no other ingredient than lactic products, enzymes and FCs essential to manufacture, or the salt needed for the manufacture of cheese has been added.

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¹ Bourdichon, F. et al. Bulletin of the IDF No. 495/2018 - Inventory of Microbial Food Cultures with Safety Demonstration in Fermented Food Products Food page 5-7