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European regulatory framework and guidance for the scientific risk assessment of food/feed products obtained with genetically modified microorganisms

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Substances like enzymes, amino acids, and vitamins are being produced for food and feed uses using modern biotechnology. The authorisation of genetically modified microorganisms derived products in the European Union market falls under several legislative instruments, in which specific requirements for the risk assessment are laid down. One of the main objectives of European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) is to guarantee the safety of these biotechnological products through the evaluation of their composition, potential toxicity and allergenicity, efficacy, nutritional value and environmental impact. To accomplish this task EFSA issues science based guidance documents for data requirement. They are regularly updated to address progress in science, new technologies and new products. The specific data requirements for the risk assessment of recombinant food enzymes will be presented with focus on the relevant genetically modified microorganism's specifications: Reliable taxonomic identification of the microbial strain; absence of potential virulence, production of toxigenic, and/or allergenic metabolites; detailed genetic modification description; and and possible presence of antibiotic resistance genes concerns.

Biography

Margarita Aguilera is Associate Professor at the Department of Microbiology of the University of Granada (Spain), where she completed her PhD in 2002 and performed Postdoctoral studies within European Project Frame and further collaborations at the Joint Research Center-EC on Biotechnology Unit. She has published 40 manuscripts in recognised journals and has been serving as an Editorial Board Member of Food, Microbiology and Biotechnology journals. She is currently Seconded National Expert at the European Food Safety Authority.

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