PRECISION FERMENTATION FAQS

What is precision fermentation?

Precision fermentation is a biotechnological process in which microorganisms are programmed to produce specific molecules, such as proteins or enzymes. It is increasingly being used to create ingredients that provide the same properties and functionality as animal-derived ingredients without involving animals.

Are animals (or animal by-products/derivatives) used to make precision fermentation ingredients or products that have been registered with the Vegan Trademark?

No. The ingredients are produced by fermenting microorganisms and are not derived from animals.

Why can a vegan-certified product contain a milk or egg allergen warning?

Some precision fermentation ingredients are designed to replicate proteins found in animal products (such as milk or eggs). Although they are not taken from animals, they may still trigger an allergic reaction in people with the allergy. Food safety laws require these allergens to be clearly declared so that consumers can make informed choices.

Are precision fermentation ingredients vegan?

Under The Vegan Society's Vegan Trademark standards, precision fermentation ingredients may be considered suitable for vegan certification if they have not involved the use of animals or animal-derived substances in their production or development, and if no animal testing has been carried out on the ingredients or the final product. An ingredient being animal-identical does not necessarily mean it is animal-derived.

What does "animal-identical" mean?

Animal-identical means that the ingredient has the same structure and function as a substance found in an animal product, but it has been produced without using the animal itself. For example, a protein can be made using precision fermentation, creating a molecularly identical protein to the one found in cow's milk, even though no cow was involved in producing it.

Why are these products being developed?

Precision fermentation offers a way to produce ingredients that replicate the taste and textures of animal ingredients without using animals. Benefits include reduced reliance on animals, greater supply chain stability, and more sustainable and ethical options for consumers.

Why is The Vegan Society registering products with animal-identical ingredients?

Precision fermentation offers a route to producing ingredients that are traditionally obtained from animals without requiring the use of animals which in turn reduces animal exploitation. The Vegan Society's mission is to make veganism mainstream and by registering precision fermentation products that contain animal-identical ingredients, we can support the development of animal-free alternatives that help consumers move away from products derived from animals.

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Are precision fermentation products safe to eat?

Any food ingredient must meet the relevant food safety requirements before it can be sold. Regulatory authorities assess new food ingredients according to applicable safety standards.

Should people with milk or egg allergies avoid these products?

Yes. If a product contains an animal-identical milk or egg protein, people with the relevant allergy should treat it the same way as the conventional allergen and follow the allergen information provided on the label.

How can I tell whether a product contains a precision fermentation ingredient?

Manufacturers may describe the ingredient on the packaging or in product information sheets. Regardless of how an ingredient is produced, any legally required allergen declarations must still be clearly displayed. Vegan Trademark Holders producing precision fermentation products must follow clear usage guidelines set out by The Vegan Society to avoid consumer confusion. Packaging declarations may appear as: *"Egg White Protein produced via precision fermentation. No animal ingredients, by-products, or derivatives are used to produce this ingredient."*

Why does your vegan standard allow certain animal-identical allergens?

As well as assessing ingredients and their raw materials, we also consider how an ingredient is produced, specifically whether animals or animal-derived substances are involved in the process, rather than whether the ingredient is identical to a substance naturally found in animals. Where a precision fermentation ingredient meets our vegan requirements, it may be eligible for certification. However, consumer safety remains essential, which is why any required allergen information must be clearly communicated.

How can I register my precision fermentation product(s) with The Vegan Society's vegan trademark?

- If you are an existing Trademark holder, please contact tvsclientrelations@vegansociety.com
- If you are a new applicant, please contact tmsales@vegansociety.com

The process is the same as for any other product and must meet our trademark standards, the only different requirement we have for precision fermentation products is the way the product is marketed to avoid consumer confusion, please contact your account manager for a copy of our Precision Fermentation Usage Guidelines.