



OIA22-0263
31 March 2022

Jody Muntz
fyi-request-18670-3d75c356@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Jody Muntz

I refer to your email of 24 February 2022 to the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) requesting information related to HEK 293 and food additives. On 3 March 2022 the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) accepted a transfer of your request from DIA in our capacity as lead agency for food safety. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

You requested:

Are there foods or products imported into New Zealand or produced in Nz containing the food additive hek293 or fetal cell lines made by the company senomyx. Including carbonated beverages, lollies, fast food chain foods or any other products including vaccines.

New Zealand Food Safety (part of MPI) has noted reports that a US company, Senomyx, used genetic material originally derived from human embryonic kidney cells in their research and development of food flavours/additives. This material is not used in the actual production of any ingredients used in food.

Human foetuses are not used as food ingredients, including flavour enhancing food additives, in New Zealand or internationally. Therefore, the part of your request relating to information on HEK 293/foetal cell lines used as food additives in New Zealand is declined under section 18(g)(i) of the OIA, *as the information requested is not held by the department and the person dealing with the request has no grounds for believing that the information is held by another department or venture or Minister of the Crown or organisation.*

With regards to HEK 293/foetal cell lines used in vaccines, the Ministry of Health may be able to assist with this part of your request. Their OIA team can be contacted at oiagr@health.govt.nz.

I trust the information provided is of assistance. Should you have any concerns with this response, I would encourage you to raise these with the Ministry for Primary Industries at Official.InformationAct@mpi.govt.nz. Alternatively, you are advised of your right to also raise any concerns with the Office of the Ombudsman. Contact details are: Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143 or at info@ombudsman.parliament.nz.

Yours sincerely

Dr Roger Cook
Acting Director Food Science & Risk Assessment

