

[UAE confirms 3,579 new COVID-19 cases, 9 deaths](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-01-25 01:12

DUBAI: The UAE on Friday recorded 3,579 new confirmed cases of COVID-19 and nine more deaths related to the disease.

Officials from the Ministry of Health and Prevention (MoHaP) said the total number of cases in the country has reached 277,955, while the death toll stands at 792.

The ministry said that 4,166 patients have recovered from the virus in the previous 24 hours, bringing the total number of recoveries to 251,484.

Abu Dhabi's Department of Health said it had approved three faster types of testing to diagnose cases of COVID-19 in hospital emergency departments or urgent care centers.

They include a rapid 15 minute antigen test, an RT-LAMP test, and a saliva test that can be used in children's health facilities when it is not possible to obtain a nasal swab.

[.@DoHSocial](#) has approved 3 new Covid-19 diagnostic tests to be used in ER departments & urgent care centres in [#AbuDhabi](#) emirate. The new tests which are based on the latest global scientific developments, provide faster results & support physicians to provide better patient care pic.twitter.com/Mmq6hT0lIa

– مكتب أبوظبي الإعلامي (@admediaoffice) [January 24, 2021](#)

Jamal Mohammed Al-Kaabi, the department's undersecretary, said the new tests have been approved based on the latest scientific developments in detecting the virus.

Currently, the PCR nasal swab test is available in 24 health centers and laboratories and eight drive-through centers throughout the emirate.

During daily inspection tours, officials from Dubai Economy said they closed down three businesses, including two gyms and a department store, and issued fines to 28 commercial establishments over failures to adhere to COVID-19 precautions.

Dubai Municipality announced it has intensified its inspection campaigns. It said five businesses were ordered to close, one was fined and warnings were issued to 26 for not complying with precautionary measures.

Elsewhere, Kuwait reported 384 new cases of COVID-19, raising the total in the country to 161,285. The death toll remained 952 after no additional deaths were reported in the previous 24 hours.

تعلن [#وزارة_الصحة](#) عن تأكيد إصابة 384 حالة جديدة، وتسجيل 507 حالة شفاء، ولم تسجل أي حالة وفاة جديدة بـ [#فيروس_كورونا_المستجد](#)

COVID-19 ، ليصبح إجمالي عدد الحالات 161,285 حالة
pic.twitter.com/lIrU6UDQtY

– الكويت - وزارة الصحة - (@KUWAIT_MOH) [January 24, 2021](#)

Oman's Health Ministry said that its total number of cases had reached 133,044 and the death toll was 1,521.

[#Statement](#) No. 273

January 24, 2021 pic.twitter.com/5HcwxYrdNj

– عُمان - وزارة الصحة - @OmaniMOH) [January 24, 2021](#)

In Bahrain the death toll stands at 367 after no new deaths were reported. The number of confirmed cases in the country increased by 361.

Out of 11440 COVID-19 tests carried out on 24 January 2021, 361 new cases have been detected among 190 expatriate workers, 160 new cases are contacts of active cases, and 11 are travel related. There were 420 recoveries from [#COVID19](#), increasing total recoveries to 96532 pic.twitter.com/dSHvx8ZvYr

– مملكة البحرين | وزارة الصحة | (@MOH_Bahrain) [January 24, 2021](#)



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Saudi Arabia announces lowest number of COVID-19 deaths since March Another record daily high as UAE confirms 3,552 new cases of COVID-19, 10 deaths

[Lebanon's top Christian cleric lashes out at 'stubborn and destructive' officials](#)

Author:

Sun, 2021-01-24 23:26

BEIRUT: Lebanon's top Christian cleric lashed out at "stubborn and destructive" officials on Sunday for blocking the formation of a new government.

Maronite Patriarch Bechara Boutros Al-Rai used his sermon to denounce those who were blocking the process, painting a grim picture of how Lebanon was struggling during the pandemic and a financial crisis.

Politicians have failed to agree on a new administration since the last one resigned after the devastating Aug. 4 explosion in Beirut. There has also been a sharp increase in tension between President Michel Aoun and Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri.

Al-Rai led mediation efforts to resolve the deadlock and complications, but failed in his endeavors.

The patriarch fumed at “the obduracy of the officials in Lebanon in their stubborn and destructive stances for the state as an entity and institutions.”

“With what conscience, what justification, what kind of authority and right, and by whose mandate do you not form a government?” he demanded to know. “Why do you not form a government when the people are crying out from pain, starving from poverty and dying from disease?”

Hospitals were full of patients, he continued. Clinics and pharmacies lacked medicines, stores lacked food, and the monetary and economic crises had reached their climax.

“The economy is fading away, agricultural production is destroyed, people are standing at the doors of banks hopelessly begging for their money, the major military, financial and judicial state institutions are hit in their prestige, morale and officials due to programmed campaigns and malicious rumors.”

Borders had no control, there was smuggling at the country’s expense, sovereignty was incomplete, independence was suspended, corruption was rampant, and unemployment and poverty affected more than half of the population, he added. “The capital is afflicted, the port is destroyed, the wealth of oil and gas is seized and the country (has) entered the orbit of final collapse.”

His anger followed an intense period of bickering between the country’s political factions about why a government was not being formed.

Aoun said the president had a constitutional right to approve the entire Cabinet formation before signing it off, while Hariri said the problem did not lie with him but “rather with the president who objects and says that he does not approve this or that name, but does not give an explanation for his objection.”

A statement on Saturday night from the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM), led by Aoun’s son-in-law MP Gebran Bassil, attacked Hariri.

“The time of foreign tutelage has ended and it is an illusion that some are trying to replace it with internal hegemony,” it said. “This means giving up attempts to seize the political rights of any Lebanese component.”

FPM MP Cesar Abi Khalil said that Aoun would not resign and that the FPM lawmakers had not named Hariri to head the government because they did not trust him with the task required at this stage.

Insults lit up social media, with lurid comments such as “Senile Aoun” and “Berri for theft and corruption,” a reference to Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri.

Former minister Nazem El-Khoury said that the patriarch had expressed the pain of all Lebanese people in his sermon.

He addressed the FPM, saying: “For those who claim to defend the rights of Christians, please do not be more Christian than the patriarch of the Maronites and the whole of Lebanon.”

The Lebanese daily Ad-Diyar reported on Sunday that a political and parliamentary official was concerned about “attempts to disrupt solutions in Lebanon as if there was a plot to bring down Lebanon.”

The official expressed fears that what was required was the “survival of the caretaker government headed by Hassan Diab until the end of the term.”

Diab formed his government last January to tackle the country’s worst economic crisis in decades. His administration came to office after his predecessor, Hariri, resigned in the face of mass protests.



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Hezbollah should have no role in Lebanon's future, says Bahaa Hariri, son of Rafik Hariri
Lebanon MPs accuse Aoun of 'acting as a party'

[Will Turkey's refugees be vaccinated against the coronavirus?](#)

Author:

Sun, 2021-01-24 23:35

ANKARA: While Turkey's COVID-19 vaccination program has been under way since Jan. 13, there has been no official declaration about whether refugees, registered or unregistered, will be immunized.

Turkey has so far received 3 million doses of vaccine and has vaccinated about 2 million citizens.

There is, however, uncertainty as to what extent the whole population will be inoculated in the shortest timeframe amid speculation that the number of vaccines available is insufficient.

The lack of any official declaration about the inclusion of migrants in the vaccination timeline may be to avoid any public backlash given negative public sentiment about Syrian refugees in Turkey.

However, experts draw attention to the responsibility of state authorities to protect members of this vulnerable group by allocating vaccines for them, not only for their own safety but also for the general health of the public.

There are about 4 million refugees registered in the country but it is difficult to estimate the number of unregistered migrants in Turkey. Last year, about 122,000 unregistered migrants were caught in Turkey, while this number was 454,000 in 2019. Hundreds of thousands more are believed to live in precarious conditions that make it impossible to follow hygiene measures to protect against the coronavirus, such as buying masks.

Metin Corabatir, former spokesman for the UN refugee agency UNHCR in Turkey and president of the Research Center on Asylum and Migration (IGAM) in Ankara, said that thousands of unregistered migrants continued to arrive in Turkey due to its long maritime and land borders with neighbors.

"Some nationals of countries with which Turkey signed visa exemption agreements over recent years also stayed in the country irregularly,

including domestic workers, after their short-term visa expired," he told Arab News.

Corabatir said that some EU countries had already begun projects to include refugees in their vaccination program to prevent a risk of contagion in the coming months.

"You cannot be sure whether the man who sits near to you in the bus is an irregular migrant or not. Therefore, an exhaustive vaccination program without discriminating against any vulnerable group is a must," he said.

Refugees in Turkey, who live close to or below the poverty line, have been hard hit by the pandemic.

Working mostly in the informal sector without any social security, they have always been vulnerable to economic shocks. Lockdown practices, restrictions of movement and the acute economic difficulties of some sectors have added to their difficulties.

Omar Kadkoy, a migration policy analyst at the Ankara-based think tank TEPAV, thinks that not vaccinating migrants in Turkey is counterproductive in curbing the spread of the virus.

"The virus does not discriminate based on nationality or based on legal status. Everybody is at risk of contracting the virus and everybody has the potential to spread COVID-19," he told Arab News.

For Kadkoy, it is no surprise that registered and unregistered refugees have not been included in the vaccination process.

"Refugees must be included in the government's designated groups of priority. For the unregistered, it already means exclusion from accessing the basic right of health services," he said.

For the time being, Kadkoy said, the government should issue temporary IDs so that anybody who is undocumented becomes eligible for vaccination.

"Thereafter, the given IDs could be used to process claims for complete documentation. In doing so, Turkey would stand at an equal distance from birth rights and human rights," he said.

More than 3,400 health care service staff are employed in 177 migrant health centers, putting extra emphasis on the danger of exposure of migrants to the contagion.

Access to health care services also appears to be a serious barrier for migrants during the pandemic.

"Hospitals in Turkey have to accept migrants under emergency situations. But unregistered migrants know very well that after their treatment the hospital authorities will inform the officials about their access to the health care services. Therefore, they will quickly be taken to the deportation centers," Corabatir said.

Experts warn that by not including migrants in the vaccination program there is a serious risk that they will not go to hospitals, even after they have contracted the coronavirus.



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Russia's RDIF signs vaccine production deal with TurkeyErdogan: 10 million CoronaVac doses could reach Turkey by weekend

[Coronavirus pandemic forces Jordanian children into labor market](#)

Author:

Sun, 2021-01-24 01:24

AMMAN: Omar's heart sinks when he trudges past his closed school gates in the Jordanian capital Amman – now part of his trip to work, to repair and clean kerosene heaters.

The 14-year-old, who dreams of becoming a pilot, is one of many minors experts say have been forced prematurely into the labor market.

Schools throughout Jordan have been closed for nearly a year now, and the economic fallout from the novel coronavirus pandemic has eaten into breadwinners' ability to feed their families.

"As school is shut, I help my family financially," said Omar, sporting a sweater and dirty jeans as he cleaned a heater with his blackened hands. He works exhausting 12-hour days at the workshop, and collapses into bed after a shower and a quick evening meal.

Overall, the work "doesn't bother me," he said.

"What is unbearable is the smell of kerosene ... (it) doesn't go away."

He earns three dinars (around \$4.25) a day, which helps pay the family's monthly rent of 130 dinars.

His contribution is vital because his father, a day laborer, has struggled to find work due to the coronavirus downturn.

But Omar has not given up hope, and said he was determined to return to school as soon as possible.

"I would love to continue my studies" and eventually become a pilot, he said.

"I don't want the coronavirus to destroy my dream."

BACKGROUND

UNICEF estimates less than a third of schoolchildren in the country have internet access, making it impossible for the bulk of pupils to follow online classes during the pandemic.

The Education Ministry has announced a return to classes next month for kindergarten and some elementary school levels, as well for students in their final year of high school.

Everyone else will have to wait until March.

UN children's agency UNICEF said that while it had no hard statistics, it believed many Jordanian children had been forced into precarious work since the pandemic began – despite it being forbidden to employ those under 16. Some 76,000 children were already working in Jordan according to the last official count, published in 2016.

"When we see children and when we speak to people, we are concerned that the numbers are increasing," said Tanya Chapuizat, UNICEF's country representative in Jordan. "It would seem logical... because we know the levels of poverty are increasing" during the coronavirus crisis, she added.

The official poverty rate in Jordan was 15.7 percent last autumn, but the World Bank has warned this will increase by 11 percentage points over "the short term."

Experts fear child labor rates will surge even higher.

"I expect child labor to increase dramatically," said Ahmad Awad, director of Jordan Labour Watch.

He pointed to both the rise in poverty and the pandemic's negative impact on Jordan's education system as drivers of this trend.



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Egypt flies aid to Jordan as talks focus on peace, trade Jordan says 2021 budget 'most difficult in kingdom's history'

[How the Arab region can catch up with the future of food](#)

Sun, 2021-01-24 00:02

DUBAI: Lab-grown meat may sound like an unpalatable sci-fi concoction, but thanks to new innovations in cellular agriculture, combined with growing consumer demand for sustainable alternatives, test-tube T-bones could soon be on the menu.

Threats to global food systems and agriculture have come to the fore since the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted regional value chains, heightening awareness about the importance of public health and regulation of new scientific techniques.

For the Middle East in particular, the crisis has been a wake-up call for policymakers acutely aware they have fallen behind in the food sciences – a gap that Saudi Arabia and the UAE are now hopeful they can close.

“Food science is definitely something that’s missing here,” Prince Khaled bin Alwaleed bin Talal Al-Saud, founder and CEO of KBW Ventures, said during a recent virtual panel discussion on “The Future of Food: New Tastes, New Priorities, New Technologies.”



Vegetarian alternatives to burgers and sausages, revived by start-ups like Beyond Meat and Impossible Burger, are enjoying a certain enthusiasm that meat giants also want to enjoy. (AFP/File Photo)

“We’ve voiced it a bunch of times and we are actually working with the UAE government to establish some sort of ecosystem to develop that.”

The panel discussion, organized as part of Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week (Jan. 18-21), examined how the world’s food needs have evolved over recent decades from hunger prevention to tackling obesity, and how they must adapt to face new realities.

“Fifty years ago, food science was created for food safety. It was not created for food health,” Gabrielle Rubenstein, co-founder and chief executive of the US private equity firm Manna Tree, told the panel.

“They were just trying to feed the world and mass produce, but we didn’t know that it would cause cancer or obesity.”

Today, the cost of treating chronic diseases caused by obesity in the US is equivalent to roughly 9 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP), while 70 percent of deaths are caused by lifestyles linked to poor diet.



This undated handout from Eat Just released on December 19, 2020 shows a nugget made from lab-grown chicken meat at a restaurant in Singapore, which became the first country to allow meat created without slaughtering any animals to be sold. (AFP/File Photo)

Solutions could lie in the new scientific innovations led by start-ups. The missing ingredient, according to Rubenstein, is scalability. "This is something that we all need to work on together," she said. "The only way we can do that is by scaling innovation knowledge and research. It's not necessarily about getting food into the hands of the country – what's totally missing is knowledge in innovation."

Universities in the UAE, for instance, currently do not offer PhDs in food science, leaving regional startups whose goal is to create the foods of the future at a disadvantage. Rubenstein's company wants to change that. "Let's take our scholar model and give this to you so that the next generation are food scientists," she said.]

One interesting takeaway from the pandemic is the shift in consumer preferences towards healthier and more sustainably produced food. Experts believe technology and regulations will have to adapt quickly to respond to these changing demands.

"We are going through what is probably the most challenging time we have gone through in the last 20 years," Prince Khaled said. "And from my point of view, it is the most important thing that has happened to us because it has shifted people's attention towards what their priorities are."

Responding to these new demands, retailers are already allocating more shelf space to the likes of Beyond Meat, Impossible Foods and other plant-based alternatives as shoppers cut back on animal products.

FASTFACT

Cultured cells

***Singapore became the first country in the world in Dec. 2020 to approve a commercial meat product made from cultured animal cells for human consumption.**

Scientists have gone a step further, exploring the revolutionary possibilities of cellular agriculture – the production of proteins, fats and tissues using lab-grown cell cultures that would otherwise have come from the slaughterhouse.

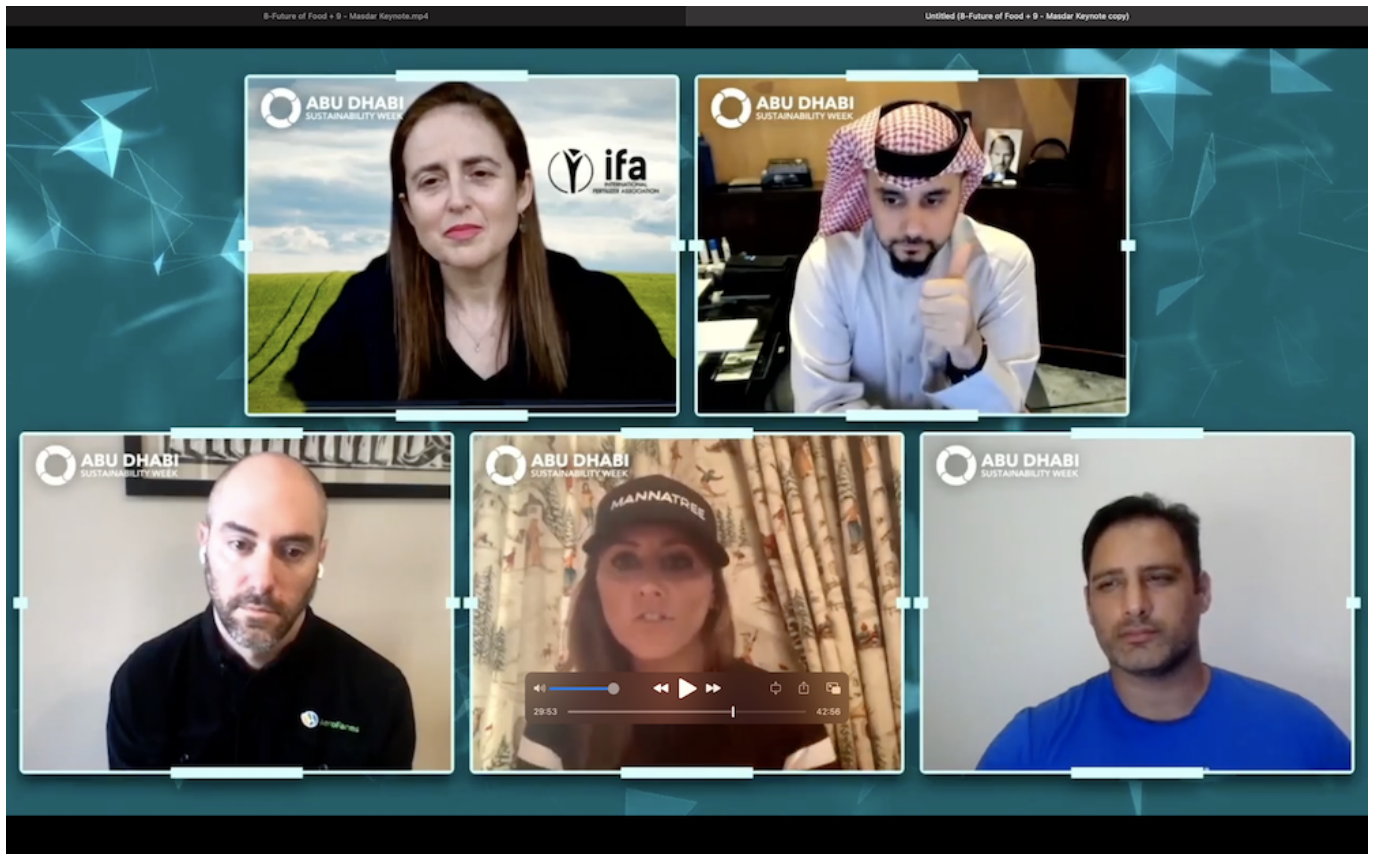
In Dec. 2020, San Francisco-based alternative protein company Eat Just announced its cultured chicken product has been approved for sale in Singapore – the first time a commercial meat product made from cultured animal cells has been approved for human consumption.

“I hail Singapore for the enormous courage that it took to just start regulating cellular agriculture,” Prince Khaled said. “This didn’t happen coincidentally during this pandemic. We’ve seen a lot of the issues that this current pandemic has driven towards; it has opened people’s eyes to the zoonotic diseases that are out there.”

High concentrations of livestock are potential breeding grounds for epidemics. Indeed, scientists believe the coronavirus responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic originated in animals sold at a wet market in the Chinese city of Wuhan before making the jump to humans.

Experts believe moving away from the mass farming of meat, eggs and dairy could not only reduce the risk of future zoonotic outbreaks but also reduce pressure on the environment.

Prince Khaled wants to see companies working in cellular agriculture and plant-based proteins demonstrate how they can address food and land scarcity. “Now’s the time to actually find solutions,” he said.



The panel discussion, “The Future of Food: New Tastes, New Priorities, New Technologies,” organized as part of Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week (Jan. 18-21), examined how the world’s food needs have evolved over recent decades from hunger prevention to tackling obesity. (Supplied)

With an estimated 9.7 billion people to feed by 2050, companies involved in these projects will have to play a role in the drafting of regulations. Much will also depend on what governments choose to subsidize.

“At the end of the day, the future is definitely going to be solved through people like these panelists – people who have the money, the backing and the investors to do it,” Prince Khaled said.

“But, more importantly, it’s a match made in heaven when you have the entrepreneurs who share that vision with you. We invested in a company that ships organic seeds to people to grow in-house. These aren’t going to solve world problems or world hunger, but collectively, that’s the only real way we’re going to be able to do something about this.”

The regulatory environment will have to move with the times to ensure a smooth transition. Singapore is currently leading the way, with its food agency working closely with start-ups.

“I’m from California and I’ve been in Singapore for a few years, but I’ve never seen anything like it,” said Max Rye, chief strategist at TurtleTree Labs, a Singapore-based biotech company founded in 2019 with the aim of producing lab-grown dairy products.

“We meet with the agency on a very regular basis. They ask questions about how we can work together to get our products to the market, and that’s not

what I'm used to hearing," he said.



Lab-grown meat from the US is presented in the Disgusting Food Museum on December 6, 2018 in Los Angeles, California. (AFP/File Photo)

By contrast, in the US much of that discussion would revolve around food safety and toxicology, he said.

"If there was any recommendation, it would be just to work much closer with your startups," Rye said. "These types of companies are trying to solve the much bigger problems around climate change among (issues)."

KBW Ventures recently increased its investment in TurtleTree Labs and Prince Khaled has joined the firm as an official adviser. He also holds investments in the California-based company Beyond Meat.

Prince Khaled agrees that a nourishing environment from a regulatory standpoint will be crucial.

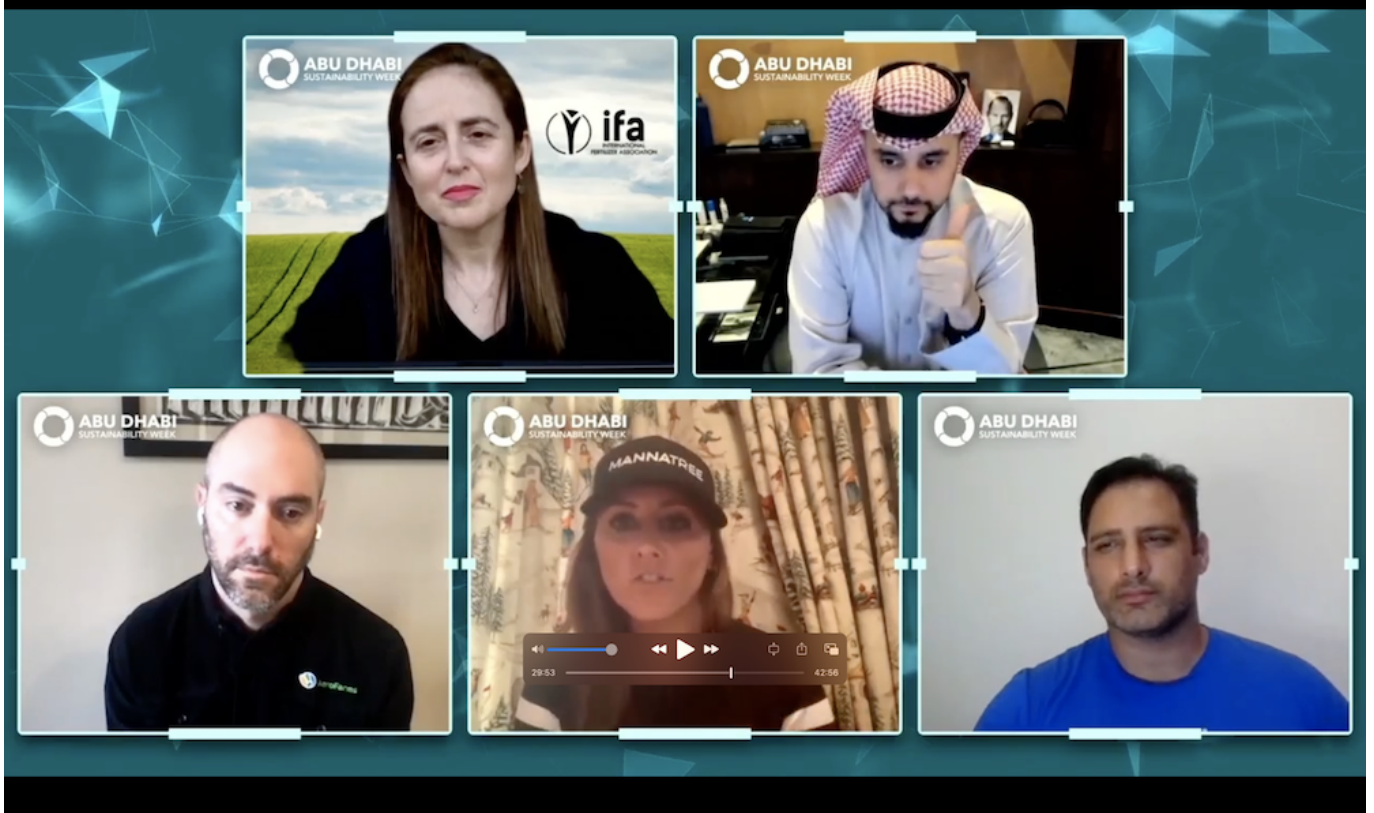
"The thing that struck me with Singapore is that this is a breakthrough when it comes to regulatory approvals," he said. "I'm really hopeful the US, and the Middle East, will follow suit."

Twitter: [@CalineMalek](https://twitter.com/CalineMalek)



8-Future of Food v 9 - Masdar Keynote.mp4

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Lab-grown meat to go on sale in Singapore in world first
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