COFALEC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A CONSISTENT USE OF THE TERM "YEAST" IN THE EU MARKET

1. Context and Purpose

Yeast is a key ingredient in European bakery traditions and food culture. As the association representing the European yeast industry, COFALEC aims to contribute constructively to discussions on terminology, consumer information and regulatory coherence within the internal market.

Across the EU, the term "*yeast*" is generally understood to refer to living microorganisms of the *Saccharomyces* family. However, in some Member States, historical practices have led to the use of expressions such as "*chemical yeast*" to describe chemical leavening agents like sodium bicarbonate. While these practices are long-standing, they do not reflect scientific terminology and may lead to inconsistencies in consumer understanding.

COFALEC wishes to encourage transparent, science-based terminology that supports clarity for consumers and coherence across the internal market.

2. Technical Background: Two Distinct Leavening Mechanisms

The accompanying technical analysis highlights the well-established scientific distinction between biological yeast and chemical leavening agents.

2.1 Biological leavening: yeast (Saccharomyces cerevisiae)

Saccharomyces cerevisiae, commonly known as "yeast", is a living microorganism that produces CO_2 through fermentation allowing the biological process that contributes to:

- dough development and gluten structure
- flavour and aroma formation
- improved digestibility and shelf life

During dough fermentation, yeast metabolizes fermentable carbohydrates via glycolysis, producing CO_2 that becomes physically trapped within the gluten network.

2.2 Chemical leavening (sodium bicarbonate)

Chemical leavening agents release CO_2 through an instantaneous acid–base reaction. They do not involve living organisms and do not contribute to enzymatic maturation or flavour development.

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That is the main reason why the designation 'yeast' should be reserved for living microorganisms and the use of the term 'chemical yeast', for sodium bicarbonate is scientifically inaccurate.

2.3 Why terminology matters

The distinction is not about safety or competition, but about **clarity and accuracy**.

Indeed, transparent terminology, also in the local languages, supports informed consumer choices, ensures consistent labelling practices and facilitates communication across Member States.

3. Diversity of Practices Among Member States

In the absence of a harmonised approach, Member States have developed different traditions and interpretations regarding the term "yeast". Some restrict it to biological yeast, while others allow broader or ambiguous terminology.

This diversity can create market barriers, and it may lead to discrepancy in labelling rules, differences in consumers' perception of the product and challenges for consistent communication across the internal market.

A shared understanding, also through the adoption of adequate legislative rules, would support coherence and transparency.

4. COFALEC's Recommendation

COFALEC respectfully recommends that EU institutions and Member States

- **Promote transparent and science-based use of the term "yeast" -** Encouraging terminology that reflects the biological nature of yeast and avoids expressions that may imply equivalence with chemical leavening agents.
- **Support consistent communication across Member States -** A more aligned approach would help reduce confusion and improve clarity for consumers.
- **Ensure accurate and non-misleading labelling -** Clear terminology contributes to informed choices and strengthens trust in food information.

5. Conclusions

COFALEC believes that promoting transparent and consistent terminology around "yeast" would benefit consumers, operators and regulators alike. Thus, with this position paper, it wants to offer a constructive contribution to ongoing discussions on clarity and coherence in the internal market.