

Full of Flavor

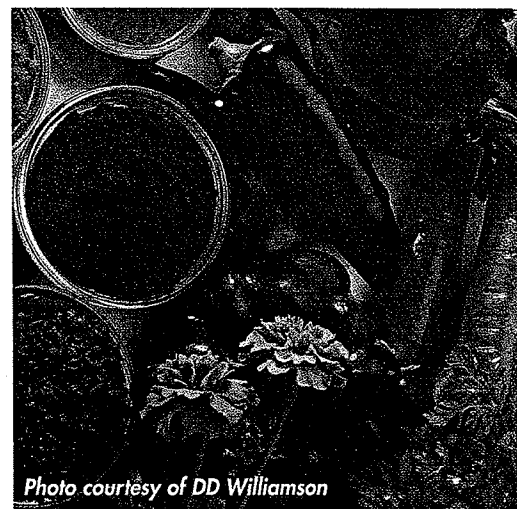


Photo courtesy of DD Williamson

The Use of Natural Flavors and Colorings in Organic Foods Comes Under Scrutiny

BY BRENDA PORTER

With the interim final rule covering 38 so-called "minor ingredients" available for use in organic foods on its way to becoming final, the organic industry as a whole—as well as some of the natural coloring raw material producers—are weighing in heavily on the debate. At issue is whether or not the proposed ingredients will detract from the ability to declare a product truly certified organic.

The 38 ingredients proposed for addition to the US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances (National List) and reviewed by the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) include: natural colors from fruits and vegetables like those from beets, blueberries and carrots, as well as ingredients or processing aids from agricultural products, such as fish oil, hops, FOS, gelatin, rice starch and whey protein concentrate.

According to the USDA, the 38 minor ingredients contained in the interim final rule are non-organic, agricultural ingredients that may be considered for use in an "organic" processed product. A minor ingredient cannot comprise more than five per-

cent of an "organic" product. However foods labeled as 100 percent organic will still be 100 percent organic. Before an organic handling operation can consider using a non-organic, agricultural minor ingredient, the organic form of the ingredient must be first sourced and confirmed unavailable.

colorMaker (Anaheim, CA) and DD Williamson (Louisville, KY) successfully petitioned the NOSB for the placement of natural colorants onto the National List of ingredients approved for use in foods labeled "organic" or "made with organic ingredients." Part of the NOSB's recommendations included 15 separate petitions filed by the two companies as well as other petitions filed by both buyers (organic food processors) and sellers (ingredient suppliers) of natural colorants.

According to Stephen Lauro, president of colorMaker, "Now, the rules for the use of natural colorants in organic food products are more clear. If an organic certified natural colorant exists, for example, certified organic caramel color, then it must be used; if not, then a non-certified natural colorant may be used provided it is on the National List."

Identifying A Need

colorMaker's Lauro added: "The NOSB decision provides a significant growth opportunity for our industry, in gener-

al, and for our company in particular."

Ronnie Cummins, national director of the Organic Consumers Association (OCA), believes that if the minor ingredients are allowed to be used, that would provide a loophole for manufacturers to use non-approved natural ingredients because the criteria for establishing the commercial availability of these non-organic ingredients are too vague.

Mastertaste's (Teterboro, NJ) manager of beverage applications, Paul Riker, said the addition of the new ingredients to the list does not water down organic standards, "Rather, we in the flavor industry now have more freedom during formulation."

Mastertaste is a global flavor and flavor ingredient manufacturer, which recently launched a new Flavor Modulation Technology that allows food and beverage processors to reduce the level of sodium by up to 50 percent in certain products and significantly reduce the caloric content in sweet products without sacrificing flavor, the company says.

Added DD Williamson's vice president Campbell Barnum, "It will encourage these types of companies to continue searching for certified organic sources. Natural coloring and flavor houses want to provide safe and healthy ingredients for food and beverage processors, and ultimately consumers."

(Continued on page 62)



Photo courtesy of Mastertaste

(Continued from page 54)

The NOSB recommendations to amend the National List with these 38 non-organic, agricultural minor ingredients are consistent with the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990, the National Organic Program (NOP) regulations, and the district court's final judgment and order on Harvey v. Johanns, dated June 9, 2005, said the USDA. The district court's final judgment and order clarified that § 205.606 shall be interpreted to permit the use of a non-organically produced agricultural product only when the product is listed in § 205.606, and when an accredited certifying agent determines the organic form of the agricultural product is not commercially available.

On May 15, 2007, the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) published proposed rule AMS-TM-07-0062 to add 38 minor ingredients to § 205.606 of the

National List with a seven-day comment period. AMS is responsible for developing quality grade standards for agricultural commodities, administering marketing regulatory programs, marketing agreements and orders, and making food purchases for USDA food assistance programs.

AMS received approximately 1,250 comments on the proposed rule, including comments expressing concern about the abbreviated comment period.

Cummins, however, said his supporters sent some 10,000 letters in opposition to the proposed list of 38 ingredients.

Under the interim final rule, organic businesses will be permitted to continue use of the 38 non-organic, agricultural minor ingredients while additional comments are sought over the 60-day comment period regarding the addition of these minor ingredients.

"Without a doubt, the addition of the new 38 ingredients will help spur growth

in the organic functional beverage and bar market. With so many more possibilities to incorporate vitamins and functional ingredients, such as minerals, organic products will be able to offer additional health benefits," said Riker.

Barnum said, DD Williamson, a specialist in caramel coloring, already contributes to the category by offering many of the colorants that are either certified organic or organic compliant. But the future product possibilities could be wide, saying the passing of the interim final rule would offer, "A broader natural color palette for improving the allure of foods and beverages through visual appeal to meet consumer demands." **NIE**

FORMOREINFORMATION:

- colorMaker, (714) 572-0444
- DD Williamson, (800) 227-2635
- Mastertaste, (888) 547-8844

ProductionLine

(Continued from page 52)

Boston Round feature a 24-400 neck and a traditional slim profile. The 100 ml bottles fit in between Alpha's 2-oz. (60 ml) and 4-oz. (125 ml) sizes. Alpha's new 6-oz. Squat Boston Round will be offered in three neck finishes (24-400, 24-410 and 24-415) to accommodate different styles of closures, pumps and sprayers.

Signed, Sealed, Delivered

Tetra Pak's (Vernon Hills, IL) general manager for nutritional products, Jim Dicks, noted that health and wellness trends are also supporting new trends in packaging, like Tetra Pak packaging, while the concern over the environment and sustainable packaging drives higher usage of this format.

"Tetra Pak is quickly becoming part of everyday life, as better formulations, processing equipment and packaging systems work together to deliver products in demand by children, teens, adults and seniors. We cover the entire healthy lifestyle platform," Dicks said.

Shelf-stable packaging technology has been around for decades, but recently has made significant gains in the functional beverages category, he added.

"Improved aseptic technology allows Tetra Pak to process sensitive ingredients, such as omega-3s, without degradation. In addition, the technology protects the flavor profiles of products, so healthy beverages taste good—also very important to consumers," said Dicks.

The benefits of Tetra Pak packaging are said to extend beyond protecting the product inside; the cartons are composed of approximately 75 percent paperboard—a renewable and recyclable resource. Nearly 50 million Americans—the equivalent of 18 million households—already have access to curbside recycling of aseptic cartons. In 2006, 21 billion cartons were recycled globally, Dicks noted.

"Our product portfolio is gaining the attention of brand holders and rapidly increasing acceptance by consumers. Today our core categories are beverages, dairy, prepared foods and nutritional products. Besides robust growth in each category you'll see new category launches in 2008. While we cannot disclose the product segments there will be launches in several new aisles of the grocery store," Dicks said.

One example of Tetra Pak's innovation is Healthy Kidz Immunity Boost, a product that was recently available for sampling at Tetra Pak's booth during the IFT Annual Meeting and Food Expo

in Chicago. It's a new healthy drink for kids aged two to seven. "The milk-based nutritional beverage is a prebiotic drink, just a bit ahead of mainstream products," said Jim Dicks.

Prebiotics (inulin) help with digestive health by stimulating growth of good bacteria in the large intestine. In addition, antioxidant vitamins A, C and E were added to the drink assist with the body's natural defenses, Tetra Pak said.

Launched last year, Tetra Pak's clear aseptic package—the Tetra Wedge Aseptic Clear—is transparent, allowing customers to see the product. A patented barrier technology protects the product and aseptic processing seals in taste and nutrition, the company says. The package's barrier properties allow for both high- and low-acid applications, making pouch-style, shelf-stable packaging a new possibility for the dairy and soy industries. According to the company, the Tetra Wedge has smooth sides and no sharp edges, and is designed with a special straw hole pocket that guides the straw to the best position to puncture the straw-hole patch. **NIE**

FORMOREINFORMATION:

- Alpha Packaging, (800) 421-4772
- AVC Corp., (888) AVC-CORP
- Innovia Films, (877) 822-3456
- O. Berk, (800) 631-7392
- Tetra Pak, (847) 955-6000



Tetra Pak's new shelf-stable packaging for nutrition drinks.