

SUBSTANTIAL EQUIVALENCE OPINION

Chia Seed (*Salvia hispanica*)

The Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) received an application in October of 2014 from Unicorn Ingredients Ltd. in the UK for an opinion on the substantial equivalence of its Chia seed (*Salvia hispanica* L) to Chia seed already on the EU market as a novel food. The comparator Chia seed on the EU market was authorised to the Chia Company in Australia by Commission Implementing Decision 2013/50/EU.

The novel Chia seed will be sourced from approved suppliers in Argentina and Bolivia and will generally conform to the compositional parameters set out in Annex I of Commission Implementing Decision 2013/50/EU. The intended uses of the novel Chia seed will be the same as for the authorised comparator as set out in Annex II of Commission Implementing Decision 2013/50/EU.

Composition

The applicant provides comparative data on the macro and micronutrients in their Chia seed which are generally equivalent to those for the authorised comparator. Minor differences are observed in the levels of ash and linoleic acid but these are within the range that would be expected due to natural variation. The applicant asserts that Chia seeds are naturally stable to oxidative degradation primarily through the natural design of their shells, which effectively seals the seed, and also by naturally occurring antioxidants present in the seed.

Nutritional Value and Metabolism

The novel Chia seed and the authorised comparator contain similar levels of the major and minor nutritional components including protein, fat, carbohydrate, dietary fibre and minerals. The metabolism of both products would not therefore be expected to differ significantly considering the close similarities in composition and nutritional value.

Intended Uses

The applicant intends using the novel Chia seed at the same levels in the food categories set out in Annex II of Commission Implementing Decision 2013/50/EU which includes baked products, breakfast cereals, fruit/nut/seed mixes and pre-packaged seed.

Level of Undesirable Substances

The applicant notes that the Chia plants are grown without the use of pesticide while harvesting and cleaning are mechanically achieved. Batch analysis demonstrates that levels of heavy metals (arsenic, cadmium, mercury and lead), aflatoxins, yeasts/moulds, *Salmonella*, *E. Coli* and *Staphylococcus aureus* are within the ranges given for the authorised comparator.

Conclusions

The FSAI is satisfied from the information provided by the applicant that Chia seed marketed by Unicorn Ingredients Ltd. is substantially equivalent to Chia seed already on the EU market and authorised to the Chia Company in Australia by Commission Implementing Decision 2013/50/EU. The designation of this novel ingredient in foodstuffs will be “Chia (*Salvia hispanica*) seeds” in accordance with *Article 2* of Commission Implementing Decision 2013/50/EU. When sold in pre-packaged form, the consumer will be informed through the label that the daily intake of Chia seed should not exceed 15 g.