

SUBSTANTIAL EQUIVALENCE OPINION

Chia Seed (*Salvia hispanica*)

The Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) received an application in September of 2013 from Chia Booster Distribution Ltd. in Ireland for an opinion on the substantial equivalence of its Chia seed (*Salvia hispanica*) 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 in Central and South America 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. The applicant proposes that based on current information, Chia seed appropriately harvested and stored can be stable and have a shelf life up to five years.

Composition

The applicant contends that Chia seed grown in different geographical locations can vary compositionally depending on latitude, soil type, agricultural practices, elevation, rainfall etc. However, the applicant demonstrates with various batch results that for optimally harvested and cleaned seed such differences are generally relatively minor. The applicant outlines the typical composition of their Chia seed which includes data on dry matter, protein, fat, carbohydrate dietary fibre and ash, all of which are broadly within the ranges for those parameters set out in Commission Implementing Decision 2013/50/EU. The applicant will continually monitor imported product to ensure that it is within compositional specifications.

Nutritional Value and Metabolism

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

Intended Uses

The applicant intends using the novel Chia seed at the same levels in the 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 commercially available herbicides are not suitable for use on the Chia plant and therefore weed management, primarily required for young plants is generally achieved by mechanical means. As a member of the mint family, the Chia plant is not susceptible to many pests or diseases and therefore residues from direct applications of pesticide or herbicide are not usually a problem.

Data relating to microbial (mycotoxins, yeasts/moulds, *Salmonella*, *E. Coli* and *Listeria*) and chemical (Dioxins and PCB congeners) contaminants as well as heavy metals (arsenic, cadmium, lead and mercury) are provided, and the applicant intends that such monitoring will continue as part of the quality control system.

Conclusions

The FSAI is satisfied from the information provided by the applicant that Chia seed marketed by Chia Booster Distribution 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.