NutraSweet seeks GRAS affirmation

The NutraSweet Co. has petitioned the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for affirmation of generally recognized as safe (GRAS) status for its fat substitute, Simplesse. The petition covers only frozen dessert applications, a company spokeswoman said.

Meanwhile, FDA has asked Reach Associates Inc. for more information concerning NutriFat, a product which the company claims is a fat replacer completely composed of ingredients already affirmed as GRAS. According to Reach Associates, the product has less than one calorie per gram on a raw basis and about three calories per gram when compounded with an edible oil.

Melvin Wolkstein of the company has described the substance as "a combination of carbohydrate and vegetable or animal proteins which can absorb vast amounts of water and are [sic] usable as fat replacers." The company may launch NutriFat once FDA makes a decision about Simplesse, Wolkstein told FDA. FDA's Richard Ronk, noting that the agency must evaluate the safety of any new food products entering the market, suggested that Reach Associates submit information about the substance's potential uses and a quantitative listing of its ingredients. Details: *Food Chemical News*, Oct. 17, 1988, pp. 33-34.

Meanwhile, Fuji Oil Co. Ltd. has petitioned FDA for affirmation of GRAS status for sheanut oil as a direct human food ingredient. Details: *Federal Register*, Sept. 30, 1988, pp. 38347-38348.

FDA publishes labeling guide

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has published a guide outlining the agency's food-labeling requirements. It contains a question and answer section which includes the most frequently asked labeling questions; illustrations also are provided.

Copies of "A Food Labeling Guide" can be purchased from the Government Printing Office at a cost of $1.75 per copy. Orders of 100 or more receive a 25% discount. The order number for the pamphlet is 017-012-06334-6. Credit card purchases can be made by calling 202-753-3238. Contact: Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20204.

FDA is not expected to finalize cholesterol labeling requirements until March 1989. According to an Office of Management and Budget report, many of the statements submitted during the comment period have raised substantive issues that go beyond the scope of the original proposal.

Meanwhile, FDA's Acting Director for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition Richard J. Ronk has issued an informal opinion on nutrition labeling which said truthful and nonmisleading, nonmandatory nutrition information may be placed on food package labels as long as it does not "intervene between mandatory information on the information panel."

Also, Ronk told the Council for Responsible Nutrition that FDA's regulation on health claims will likely permit claims as long as a publication is available on how to use food labeling. He said a general message to consumers will be available at grocery stores and from FDA. Generic explanations will cover several types of health claims, including those for cardiovascular disease. The agency will rely on the U.S. Surgeon General's report on nutrition and health for claims not covered by the generic consumer publications, he said.

Meanwhile, a coalition of food industry associations, government officials and medical and nutrition groups has launched Project LEAN (Low-Fat Eating for America Now). The group's purpose is to encourage the food industry and others to promote lower-fat foods and menu items. The group will run an advertising campaign, produce educational material and maintain a hotline on dietary fat and chronic disease. Details: *Food Chemical News*, Sept. 19, 1988, pp. 48-49; Oct. 3, 1988, pp. 8-11, 25-26, 50-52.

Program includes cottonseed oil

A U.S. House and Senate Conference Committee has expanded the Sunflower Oil Assistance Program (SOAP) to include cottonseed oil. Under the revised program, to be called the Sunflower and Cottonseed Oil Assistance Program (SCOAP), exporters will be able to receive bonuses in the form of USDA-purchased sunflowerseed and cottonseed oils.

Originally, SOAP was created to encourage sunflowerseed oil sales in markets where U.S. oil competes with subsidized oils from other countries. In its original form, the legislation directed the Secretary of Agriculture to purchase $10 million of sunflowerseed oil to facilitate export sales. The more recent plan authorizes an additional $20 million for the purchase of both sunflowerseed and cottonseed oil for export, with the money spent by the end of the 1990 fiscal year.

EPA modifies hexane rule

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has changed its definition of hexane for test purposes and has eliminated the requirement of a 45-day waiting period between submission of neurotoxicity study plans and initiation of neurotoxicity testing.

Earlier this year, EPA ruled that commercial hexane manufacturers and processors had to test the chemical for subchronic toxicity, oncogenicity, reproductive toxicity, developmental toxicity, mutagenicity, neurotoxicity and inhalation and dermal pharmacokinetics.

EPA has redefined commercial hexane for testing as a mixture that contains at least 40 liquid-volume percent but no more than 55 liquid-volume percent *n*-hexane, and no less than 10 liquid-volume percent methylcyclopentane (MCP). Details: *Federal Register*, Oct. 4, 1988, pp. 38952-38953.