Position of Soy Protein Processors in Relation to Laws and Regulations

JOSEPH N. CZARNECKI, Griffith Laboratories, Chicago, Illinois

ABSTRACT

Soy protein products in the U.S. fall under the regulatory powers of the Food and Drug Administration as far as processing plants are concerned. The U.S. Department of Agriculture controls their use in meat and poultry products. Many states have separate regulations. The industry is expected to know federal and state regulations and interpret them for the customer. Difficulties arise for the processor when there are so many different state, Food and Drug Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and foreign regulations that affect the products. This Conference might spearhead world-wide cooperation in the development of future regulations.

INTRODUCTION

Soy products, as produced in the U.S., all fall under the regulations of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). This covers the manufacturing processes and processing plants themselves without regard to the eventual utilization of the soy product.

Soy flour has been used extensively for ca. 50 years in food products in the U.S. It has been used on a relatively limited scale in meat products, which fall under the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) regulations, for ca. 40 years.

A great break-through was made in 1962 when soy protein concentrate was permitted in meat products from federal meat inspected plants. In 1964 the isolated soy protein and the textured vegetable proteins were approved for use in federal meat inspected plants.

The greatest difficulty that is encountered from a regulatory point of view on the processors' part is that the supplier or processor is looked upon by the food industry as the expert in use and labeling. The inability of the industry itself to agree upon a position has, to some extent, hampered the regulatory aspects.

Soy flour and soy protein concentrate in meat products can be used with proper labeling the same as any other extender, such as non-fat dry milk or wheat and corn flours. In specific products, such as frankfurters or bologna, a level of 3-1/2% is permitted.

The current regulations, however, do not permit the same usage of textured vegetable proteins. Their use in meat products, at the present time, is limited to nonspecific products, such as meat loaves with fanciful names or imitation type products. The USDA is, at the present time, proposing a change in this situation and will allow textured vegetable proteins to be used at the same level, with proper labeling, as soy flour, soy protein concentrate, and soy isolate.

Currently in meat products, due to the lack of fibers in soy protein isolate, a requirement for titanium dioxide as a tracer is included in the regulations. Also, the soy protein isolate is limited to 2% in standardized products.

VARIETY OF REGULATIONS AND REGULATORY BODIES

To inform our customers properly, it is necessary and certainly rational to expect that the regulations all over the country are the same and are enforced uniformly. In the U.S., this is not the case. Certain states, for various reasons, discriminate against soy products, making it extremely difficult for a processor to advise his customers who may sell products in various states which require different regulations.

It may be that an educational program is necessary by the soy processors to educate all of the states and point out the desirability of all regulatory bodies speaking the same language. Ideally, they should all follow the federal regulations and enforce them accordingly.

The difficulty we have in the U.S. can be seen readily. This difficulty is compounded when exporting soy protein products all over the world, because each country also establishes its own regulations and enforces them in its own way.

With reference to non-meat products or non-federally inspected meat plants, the regulations applying to the various soy products fall under the FDA.

Over the years some companies have been successful in manufacturing and marketing so called specialty foods aimed primarily at the dietetic market or, in some instances, the religious community.

Products produced under FDA regulations allow for much more flexibility of finished product, provided, of course, that the labels are informative for the consumer.

We are fortunate in the U.S. to have regulatory bodies concerned with the soy industry who are sympathetic to the problems of the processor and who are willing to sit down and work with the industry toward a common goal.

It might be a possibility for this Conference to spearhead world-wide cooperation in regulations which would benefit the protein-poor areas and bring inexpensive high nutrition to the whole world.

PROCESSORS' COMPLEX ROLE

The processors' role in the U.S. will become more complex with regard to labeling information when the proposed new nutritional guidelines go into effect. These guidelines proposed both by the FDA and the USDA will assure the consumer of finished products (whether it be a meat-soy combination or a soy product by itself) which are high in protein efficiency, as well as in micronutrients and amino acids.

The soy industry, through the Food Protein Council, has been working closely with both the USDA and the FDA in setting up nutritional guidelines which are reasonable and which will assure the consumer of a high quality product. The final regulations, hopefully, will be logical and fair both to the processor and to the consumer.

The current great interest in soy proteins is, indeed, a challenge which must be met by the processors and the regulatory bodies themselves, since we must always remember that, even though we are processors or affiliated with regulatory agencies, we are also consumers and what we do for industry, we do for ourselves.