SUMMARY PAPER

SUMMARY OF THE ACNFP'S CONCLUSION ON THE TRADITIONAL FOOD NOTIFICATION FOR *SORGHUM BICOLOR* SYRUP

At the 134th meeting of the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (ACNFP) the traditional food from a third country notification dossier for syrup of *Sorghum bicolor* was considered.

Sorghum syrup is extracted from crushed sorghum stalks and processed to concentrate the juice. The applicant indicates that it has been used in the USA for over 25 years. The applicant intends to market sorghum syrup as a natural sweetener as an alternative to honey. The summary of the application can be viewed on the Commission website.

The advice of the Committee to the Food Standards Agency is summarised below. Please note the focus of the novel food assessment is to ensure the food is safe, not misleading and not putting consumers at a nutritional disadvantage.

The Committee assessed the information supplied and considered that sufficient data was presented to demonstrate a long history of consumption of sorghum syrup in the USA. However, they raised concerns that it was unclear as to the composition of the product seeking authorisation and whether this would be the same product used in the traditional manner. To address this the Committee would have preferred clearer data on the composition of the product seeking authorisation. This lack of clarity led the Committee to question whether the novel food was a juice or a syrup.

The Committee also questioned whether the product would replace sugar already in the diet or whether it could become a new source with potential implications for whether the product could put consumers at a nutritional disadvantage.

The Committee commented that data was lacking on the manufacturing process and growth of sorghum, raising concerns about the potential for concentration of heavy metals. It was suggested that it would have been useful if the application had been clearer on compliance with EU standards in these areas had been considered. From the information provided effective management of any heavy metal contamination and monitoring for pesticides or mycotoxins was not considered by the applicant.

The Committee noted that the applicant acknowledged that the product could be vulnerable to microbiological contamination but had not provided an indication of shelf life of the product. The Committee highlighted that the balance of glucose, fructose and sucrose within the product may support the growth of pathogens and that the undisclosed pH levels might allow *Clostridium botulinum* growth. It was also noted that the applicant had not provided information on whether pathogens were present in the product or details of management strategies to control microbiological risks.

The Committee considered the likely risk of allergenicity from the product to be low, however it was suggested that this could be supported with further details on USA experience of consumption.

An overarching concern raised by the Committee was the lack of details on the literature reviews performed and methodology used to explore known allergenicity, toxicity and microbiology risks. Details on the extraction of data and its contribution to the assessment of risk were not presented. The lack of a thorough literature review was felt to be unfortunate as it prevented learning from the experience of using the product in the USA.

Conclusion

The Committee advised the FSA that whilst no specific safety risks were identified, they had concerns that the information provided in the dossier was insufficient to support a robust and in-depth assessment of the traditional food. The Committee commented that the lack of information on controls in the process and the absence of learning from experience of product use in the USA, raised questions on whether safety had been sufficiently demonstrated. The evidence provided did not support the Committee reaching a conclusion on whether the product would meet the criteria for authorisation under the Novel Food Regulation