

ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR NOVEL FOODS AND PROCESSES**CHIA SEEDS EXTENSION OF USE FOR CEREAL BASED READY MEALS
- DOSSIER 215****ISSUE**

1. The Spanish Competent Authority (CA) has prepared an initial assessment report on an application for the extension of use of chia seeds under the Novel Foods Regulation (EC) No 258/97. The additional use proposed is as an ingredient in sterilised ready-to-serve meals based on cereal, pseudocereals and/or pulse grains with vegetables and seasonings.
2. The Committee is asked whether it agrees with the initial opinion and whether it would like to make any further comments on this application. The Committee's advice will form the basis for the UK's formal response to the Commission.

Background

3. On 20 July the European Commission forwarded the initial opinion of the Spanish Agency for Consumer Affairs, Food Safety and Nutrition (AECOSAN) on an application made by Herba Ricemills S.L.U. under Article 4 of the Regulation for the extension of use of Chia seeds into further food categories.
4. The Commission has requested the views of Member States on the Spanish CA's initial opinion. Member States have until 20 September to submit any comments and/or reasoned objections to the Spanish assessment.
5. The application dossier is attached as **Annex A**, the Spanish Initial Assessment Report is attached as **Annex B**. **Annex A and B** contain protected information.

This application

6. The applicant intends to extend the authorised uses of chia seeds as an ingredient in sterilised ready-to-serve meals based on cereal, pseudocereals and/or pulse grains with vegetables and seasonings. The ready-to-serve meals are intended to be sold at room temperature and have a prolonged shelf life of one year. The chia seeds used meet the existing specification and received a substantial equivalence authorisation in November 2016.

7. The applicant details the production process which includes a description of the sterilisation process of the ready-to-serve meals. In the ready meal, the chia seed are immersed in a liquid emulsion (water, oil, essences, emulsifier etc.) this emulsion the applicant suggests provides the water that is used to hydrate the chia. The sterilisation process also hydrates the chia seeds. The applicant has shown that the sterilisation process is effective at controlling the identified microbiological risks and it has a HACCP system in place.
8. The applicant intends to market the novel food at room temperature, it will have a shelf life of 1 year and its final preparation prior to it being consumed will entail it being heated in a microwave for one to two minutes depending on the weight of the product (Between 125g and 400g). A study on the behaviour of the novel food during storage was undertaken using different temperatures. Predictive models were then used to determine the shelf life of the chia products. This resulted in the shelf life of 1 year.
9. In estimating the potential increased intake of the novel ingredient the Spanish opinion notes surveys of food intake do not provide data on the consumption of pulses, cereals or pseudocereals as part of ready meals. To assess the potential intake the applicant has used a report on food production, industry, distribution and consumption in Spain by Mercasa (a public company) and the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and the Environment (Mercasa 2016) as a basis for their assessment. The report estimated that total consumption of ready-to-serve meals in 2015 was 12.9kg per person per year. 9.3% of the total consumption of ready-to-serve meals was consumed as preserved vegetables, pulses and pasta. This equates to 1.2kg of this type of ready-to-serve meals consumed per person per year. Assuming the maximum permitted chia seed content (5% by weight), chia seed consumption would be 60g per year or 0.16g per day. The applicant states at the European level an expected average consumption of ready-to serve meals is provided of 12.1 kg/year, which would mean a chia consumption of 56g per year or 0.15g per day.
10. As the consumption estimates used in the assessment were on the basis of the average consumption of ready-to-eat meals per person, the Spanish opinion suggests this may not represent high consumption groups. They suggest a more appropriate estimate of the intake of chia is made on the basis of the consumption of a daily dish of 200g containing 5% chia seed. This would be the equivalent to an intake of 10g of chia seed per day. While this represents an unlikely scenario it was felt to be sufficiently conservative to take account of the uncertainty in consumption estimates. The Spanish opinion considers the applicant's estimates of intake are appropriate.
11. The applicant has stated that, to date, there has been no evidence of allergies, anti-nutritional effects or toxic effects caused by the consumption of chia seeds in the US, Canada or Australia. The Spanish Opinion refers to a recent case of

anaphylaxis caused by consumption of chia seed¹. As this is only one single recorded case further assessment was not felt to be needed. The opinion indicates that the potential for food allergy would be managed in this case through labelling which should enable any consumers allergic to seeds to avoid consuming them.

COMMITTEE ACTION REQUIRED

- Members are asked whether they agree with the initial opinion from the Spanish CA, and whether they wish to make any comments on the application.
- The Committee's advice will form the basis for the UK's formal response to the opinion of the Spanish CA.

**Secretariat
July 2017**

Annexes attached:

- Annex A** Application dossier for the approval of the extension of use of chia seeds
- Annex B** Initial Opinion of the Spanish Authority – Official Sensitive

¹ García Jiménez, S., Pastor Vargas, C., de las Heras, M., Sanz Maroto, A., Vivanco, F. and Sastre, J. (2015). Allergen characterisation of chia Seeds (*Salvia hispánica*), a new allergenic food. *Journal of Investigational Allergology and Clinical Immunology*; 25 (1), pp: 55-82.