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Technical Consultation - Health Canada's 2013 Call for Data on Adventitious Presence of Soy

September 19, 2013

Bureau of Chemical Safety
Food Directorate
Health Products and Food Branch



Canada 

Background

In Canada, and in other countries, normal agricultural practices result in cereal grains often being grown in close proximity to other types of grain, oilseeds and pulses. Also, these grains can be harvested, stored and transported using the same equipment and facilities. Because of this, it is extremely difficult to keep small amounts of these different crops from getting mixed in with each other at low levels. This unintended presence, or co-mingling, is sometimes also referred to as **adventitious presence**.

As a result of this adventitious presence, cereal grains, such as wheat, oats or barley, and processed foods made using these grains, may contain low levels of soy.

In late 2012, Health Canada organized a meeting between representatives of the federal government (Health Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), the Canadian Grain Commission (CGC), the food industry and Anaphylaxis Canada) to discuss issues related to adventitious presence of soy in cereal grains. A key focus at the meeting was whether food allergen precautionary labelling, specifically, use of the statement “may contain soy”, was warranted for flour and other wheat based products.

Based on the information currently available, Health Canada's position is that precautionary labelling for soy on wheat based products, unless it is warranted by specific concerns related to allergen controls and possible cross contamination at the manufacturing level, is not considered an appropriate response to this issue.

On January 25, 2013 the Food Directorate's Bureau of Chemical Safety (BCS), provided [information for Canadians with soy allergy](#) on Health Canada's website regarding the issue of adventitious presence of soy. Health Canada also indicated that it was initiating a two year process to gather information and data necessary to fully evaluate the issue of the adventitious presence of soy in wheat and to develop standards and guidance for the food industry regarding appropriate labelling.

Information Being Considered

Health Canada has initiated a call for data, effective September 19, 2013, and is actively seeking submissions of published and unpublished technical information on the adventitious presence of soy in cereal grains and cereal-based foods. The main goal of this call for data is to obtain information to assist in identifying priorities for the development of risk management strategies for soy allergic individuals.

Health Canada is interested in obtaining the following types of information:

- Any information regarding the levels of soy that have been detected in any cereal grains, such as wheat, rye or barley, as a result of adventitious presence;

- Any research which is currently being conducted related to co-mingling of grains;
- Any information on currently available industry practices that can remove or reduce the adventitious presence of soy and/or how effective these practices are;
- Any published or unpublished studies with information about the levels of soy protein that is associated with allergic reactions in soy allergic individuals (particularly, information on soy threshold levels), and;
- Any other relevant information that falls within the scope of the following document: [Information for Canadians with Soy Allergy](#).

Confidential and/or unpublished information

Health Canada recognizes that some of the available information and/or relevant data that is being requested may be unpublished or of a confidential nature. If submitted, unpublished information would remain the property of the submitting organization or individual and will be used in confidence for Health Canada's evaluation purposes only. Such information would be safeguarded under [Section 20 \(1\) \(b\) of the Access to Information Act – Confidential Information supplied by a Third Party](#). Specific issues relating to confidentiality should be discussed directly between the information owners and Health Canada. For these and other issues please contact the Food Directorate's [Bureau of Chemical Safety](#).

Information Submissions

Information may be submitted in writing, either by regular mail or electronically, to the Bureau of Chemical Safety's [Chemical Health Hazard Assessment Division](#). If you are submitting your comments or data electronically, please use the words "**adventitious soy**" in the subject box of your e-mail. **This call for data will end on March 19, 2014.**