

Soil Association

Processing Standards Committee

18th October 2007 Summary Minutes

Present: Andrew Whitley (chair), Benjamin Dent, Kath Dalmeny, Richard Lawrey, Keith Vivers, Rob Freeman.

Staff: Francis Blake, Keith Ball, Ken Hayes, Hanna Brooke, Emma Titterton, Jonathan Troth, Suzy Madigan (part).

Apologies: Brian Elliott, Geetie Singh, Eurwen Richards, James Ashton, Dorothy Cullinane, Tim Finney.

1. Minutes from the last meeting (15/3/07)

Minutes approved.

2. General review of processing standards

Processing had been identified as one of the areas for in-depth review. The committee identified the following main areas to consider in the review:

1. Processing principles and methods (including additives) and Organic HACCP
2. Restaurants and catering (including the catering standards, catering code of practice and Food for Life)
3. Flavours, Fermentation, Functional foods ('organic' chemistry), Wood/peat smoke.

Cross cutting issues to deal with during the process: health; equivalence; labelling; consumer info/publicity.

It was decided not to consider as this time: review of the principles; hygiene; nitrites/nitrates; non-organic ingredients; abattoirs; ethylene; energy and waste (future climate change work).

3. Ethylene use in onions and potatoes to prevent greening

Ethylene has traditionally been used to degreen bananas. Two years ago the EU regulation was amended to allow ethylene for ripening kiwis and kakis, and for flower induction in pineapples. However the Soil Association has not allowed these. Defra was now in receipt of an application to extend ethylene use to prevent sprouting (and greening) of onions and potatoes. The committee agreed it was best to pull together the whole subject of ethylene use into one working group, rather than deal with each new application on an ad hoc basis. However, starting this should wait for the time being, as it is unlikely that it will go before the Commission until 2009.

4. Labelling of non-organic topnotes in fruit juices

Defra had confirmed that non-organic top-note additions must be labelled. Juice manufacturers were now labelling this. It was pointed out that labelling non-organic topnotes either contradicts the juice regulations (because they cannot contain flavourings) or the organic regulation (because they contain non-approved non-organic ingredients). Article 19.3 of the new regulation deals with this issue but has further implications:

Substances and techniques that reconstitute properties that are lost in the processing and storage of organic food, that correct the results of negligence in the processing of these products or that otherwise may be misleading as to the true nature of these products shall not be used.

The committee agreed to hold on this amendment, check back to Defra's correspondence on the issue, and seek further guidance from Defra as to the implications of the new article 19.3.

5. Referrals from Certification Committee

5.1 Rice labels

SACL had identified that the rice labels were made from organic potato starch and were made in Holland. The ink was not permitted in the regulation. The committee agreed that these labels should be treated as such and therefore the ink does not need to comply.

5.2 X-rays

Food Standards Agency had provided an interpretation that using x-rays to detect foreign bodies and other non-treatment applications on organic food was acceptable. It was reported that in the Food Commission's investigation of ionising radiation, x-rays did not come up with any contamination or health issues. The committee accepted the FSA interpretation.

5.3 In-conversion labelling

40.10.7 - agreed to add: *the product must contain only one agricultural ingredient*. To be sent to consultation.

5.4 Record keeping

40.6.10 - agreed to amend: *you must .. keep all records for at least two years or six months beyond its sell by date, whichever is the longer*. To be sent to consultation.

5.5 Organic and in-conversion in one box

The committee agreed it was important to clearly identify the in-conversion products in a box, but this could be either with labelling or on paperwork. 40.10.43 – amend to: *you must .. wrap and label in-conversion produce separately from organic or make sure that it is identified on paperwork*. To be sent to consultation.

5.6 Rubber matting

The committee felt that bedding in abattoirs was important but agreed to leave this issue to the review of animal welfare in the agriculture standards committee.

5.7 Labelling clarification

The committee agreed to add to 40.10.19: However, you must still identify all non-organic ingredients, including ingredients of ingredients. Also agreed to delete 40.10.21. To be sent to consultation.

6. Responses to ban on non-organic release oils in baking

There were three responses to the consultation question about using organic release oils – one in favour, two against. The main resistance seemed to be because of cost. However there was concern over whether there were other technical reasons. It was agreed the need to ascertain exactly the cost, inconvenience and difficulties involved and that this should be part of the review of processing methods.

7. Organic gelatin

The issue of necessary additives for the production of organic gelatin was coming before the authorities. It was agreed: to consider this in the context of the review of processing methods; to allow use of organic gelatin in preference to non-organic; SACL should not certify organic gelatin itself for the time being.

8. Thickeners

The additives microcrystalline cellulose and carboxymethyl cellulose had previously come before the committee, and had been rejected. In response to a request to support an application to Defra despite this, there was agreement that, as they were not appropriate thickeners for use in organic products, the Association should not support such an application.