



Authorization of Steviol Glycosides : the soft drinks industry welcome the news

The European Commission's decision to authorize the use of steviol glycosides (stevia) as a sweetener in foods and beverage has been universally welcomed by the soft drinks industry. The regulation permitting the sale and use steviol glycosides was published in the Official Journal of the European Union as of 12th November and the regulation has now entered into force, is binding in its entirety and directly applicable in the EU Member States allowing for sale of products formulated with steviol glycosides.

Dominique Reiniche, President Coca-Cola Europe, said, "Coca-Cola Europe welcomes the European Commission's approval of stevia as a sweetener in foods and beverage across Europe. The addition of stevia to the range of sweeteners we already use in our drinks gives us even more option to innovate and develop the best-tasting drinks for our consumers. This is another important milestone as we grow our portfolio to offer even more choice for every occasion and lifestyle."

The average calorie content of a serving of Coca-Cola Europe's sparkling drinks has been reduced by 10% over the past 10 years. The company says it will continue to innovate using a variety of sweeteners across its beverage portfolio to deliver drinks with lower calories that meet consumer's tastes. When Stevia was first approved as a sweetener for use in foods and beverage in France in 2009, The Coca-Cola Company was one of the first in Europe to launch a beverage sweetened with stevia, in combination with other natural sweeteners. Since March 2010, a stevia-sweetened Fanta Still has been available to French consumers, with 30% less sugar.

PureCircle, the world's leading producer and marketer of high purity stevia products, is also pleased with the news. Jordi Ferre, President Commercial Division for PureCircle Limited, stated

the sweetener "will play an important role in addressing consumer interest in healthier diets and sustainable ingredients, as well as to help offset rising commodity costs for our customers"

Food and beverage sweetened with stevia are increasingly being launched around the world. In the latest research study by the PureCircle Insights Group, awareness of the sweetener among the general population had already reached 47% by July 2011.

"PureCircle and our customers have been preparing for some time in anticipation of European approval. Our entire line of stevia ingredients, including our recent launch of breakthrough sweetener PureCircle Alpha, fully meets EU specifications. With our portfolio of solution and our broad reach through joint ventures with leaders in the sugar industry, including Nordzucker and Tereos, we are fully prepared for a new exciting stage of stevia development in Europe," stated Jason Hecker, VP Global Marketing and Innovation for PureCircle Limited.

Meanwhile Wild is amongst those ingredient suppliers who have developed stevia based sweetening concepts. "Early on, we expected a positive EFSA opinion stating that stevia is a safe ingredient in food and therefore, we put all of our effort into developing our high-quality Sunwin Stevia portfolio", said Michael Ponder, CEO of Wild Flavors GmbH. Our stake in Sunwin International, one of the leading stevia producers, gives us clear-cut advantages. We are optimally prepared for bulk stevia request as well as product formulation of low calorie products."

Food and beverage manufacturers can also benefit from the company's 'Taste Optimizer Natural Flavor Systems'. The technology has enabled Wild to eliminate the characteristic liquorice nuance and bitter aftertaste often associated with stevia.



Fanta Still sweetened with stevia has been available in France since March 2010.