



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Greetings!

The Stevia Plant is the Natural Source for Steviol Glycosides

The European Stevia Association (EUSTAS) (1) and the International Stevia Council (ISC) (2) offer the following comments on the decision of the land court Konstanz [Az: 7 O 32/12 KfH] and a press release from the consumer advice centre of Baden-Württemberg e.V. in regards to the court decision on stevia sweetener and its sweet compounds, steviol glycosides. Steviol glycosides are approved as a new sweetener under European law and can be used in multiple food and beverage categories. Since 2011, steviol glycosides have been enjoyed successfully by consumers in all EU countries at an ever-growing rate. This sweetener appeals to consumers who desire a more balanced and healthy lifestyle, based on its natural occurrence in the stevia leaf.

The press release (3) states that, "*steviol glycosides do not occur naturally in foods*" and that "*the sweetener has nothing to do with the actual plant*". These statements are incorrect and therefore misleading consumers. Steviol glycosides are the sweet compounds that occur originally in the leaves of the stevia plant and that are extracted using conventional plant extraction techniques as described in the Regulation (EU) No 231/2012 (4):

"The manufacturing process comprises two main phases: the first involving water extraction of the leaves of the Stevia rebaudiana Bertoni plant and preliminary purification of the extract by employing ion exchange chromatography to yield a steviol glycoside primary extract, and the second involving recrystallisation of the steviol glycosides from methanol or aqueous ethanol resulting in a final product consisting mainly (at least 75 %) of stevioside and/or rebaudioside A."

The Joint Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) (5) and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) (6) have described the extraction similarly.

Each manufacturer has the freedom to combine and complement individual steps of processing as long as they adhere to Regulation (EC) No 1333/2008, page 2, point 13. The guidelines of current Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) have to be applied. The quality (7) of the final product is clearly defined. These methods are certainly not drastic or extensive. On the contrary, simple physical separation steps are available. The product of physical separation is by definition an extract. Alone with simple filtering techniques it is now possible to gain the sweetener from the plant.

In addition, we would like to point your attention to a judgement of a German court (8) stating that the "leaves of the stevia plant" are not a novel food, they are not subject to the Regulation (EC) No 258/97 (9) and therefore do not need a Novel Food approval. Having this judgement in mind, steviol glycosides do naturally occur in the traditional food "stevia leaves", which is why it could be marketed as such (10).

Based on the above, it is clear that consumers get the exact same sweet molecules, which are naturally present in the leaves of the plant and that are offered to them in the form of stevia extracts. The statement, that "*the sweetener steviol glycosides has nothing to do with the actual plant*", is misleading and suggests to consumers that steviol glycosides are synthetic compounds. However, steviol glycosides are clearly a part of the stevia plant. This means that, in accordance with the EU regulations cited above, there are no steviol glycosides without the green leaves of the stevia plant.

(1) The European Stevia Association :

http://www.eustas.org/engl/index_engl.html

(2) The International Stevia Council: <http://www.internationalsteviacouncil.org/>

(3) <http://www.vz-bawue.de/gericht-untersagt-stevia-werbung>

(4) Annex of Commission Regulation (EU) No 231/2012, page 270

(5) FAO JECFA Monographs 10 (2010)

(6) EFSA Journal (2010);8(4):1537

(7) Annex of Commission Regulation (EU) No 231/2012, page 270

(8) Judgement M 4 K 03.4528 from the Bavarian administrative court Munich (2004)

(9) Regulation (EC) No. 258/97

(10) Publication from the company MedHerbs (2012): Blätter der Stevia sind ein traditionelles Lebensmittel