



IFAC Statement on NOSB Decision to Remove Carrageenan from the National List

On November 17, 2016, the U.S. National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) members voted to remove carrageenan from the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances, a decision that, if implemented by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), will force many organic food producers to reformulate or consider taking products off the market entirely. The use of alternative ingredients, which do not possess the same functionality as carrageenan, may negatively impact the quality of many organic foods and beverages and may reduce organic options.

Throughout the NOSB meeting, public commenters representing carrageenan producers, organic food manufacturers, farmers and other interested parties presented evidence demonstrating carrageenan is a safe and essential organic food ingredient. Although the NOSB ultimately recommended that USDA remove carrageenan from organic foods, they were clear in their discussion that carrageenan is safe for consumption and that their decision was not based on safety concerns.

Carrageenan's use in food is supported by decades of research and approvals by every food regulatory body in the world, including the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Carrageenan is unmatched in its ability to bind protein and water to create desirable textures, prevent ingredient separation, reduce fat and extend shelf-life in meat and dairy products. It is also extremely important as a stabilizer in liquid infant formula, ensuring that critical nutrients remain in suspension and promoting optimal infant nutrition. Removal of carrageenan from organic foods and beverages will result in products that are less nutritious, less appealing, less enjoyable and more expensive.

The NOSB decision to remove carrageenan when there are no wholly organic alternatives sets a concerning precedent and raises questions about the weight of objective scientific research when applied to food ingredients. It also means that larger amounts or multiple non-organic ingredients will be needed to replace the small amounts of carrageenan. At a time when the organic industry wants to continue to grow and deliver more options to consumers, the removal of carrageenan will ultimately reduce the number of organic foods and beverages.

IFAC will continue to provide accurate and high quality scientific evidence to support the safety and essentiality of carrageenan and other ingredients in organic food. We will also continue working with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and FDA to ensure that major food regulatory decisions are based on sound science.

About IFAC

The International Food Additives Council (IFAC) is a global association representing manufacturers of food ingredients. Founded in 1980, IFAC strives to promote science-based regulation and the global harmonization of food ingredient standards and specifications.