



## **IFAC Commends USDA for Upholding Organic Principles and Maintaining Carrageenan in Organic Food**

On April 4, 2018 the US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) announced carrageenan will continue to be allowed in organic foods and beverages, thus rejecting a recommendation by the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) to remove the substance based on a claim it is not essential to organic production. This decision turns back a potentially precedent-setting proposal that would have permitted an advisory board to discontinue the use of a substance based on inaccurate information and was not in line with organic principles.

Carrageenan has been permitted in organic food production since 2003, and was relisted based on recommendations from the NOSB in 2007 and 2011. While NOSB members raised questions in recent years about carrageenan safety, its November 2016 vote to remove carrageenan was based not on safety concerns, but on a perceived lack of essentiality in organic production. This, despite clear and substantive examples provided by the organic food industry that removing carrageenan would have significant impacts on the organic market and result in products that are less nutritious, less appealing, and more expensive, and in some cases removal of some products from the market altogether.

The AMS decision to keep carrageenan in organic food is not only good news for formulators and consumers, it represents sound scientific policy and demonstrates USDA's commitment to making organic decisions based on science and technical evidence rather than manipulative opinions and misperceptions. Carrageenan has long been an additive of interest, despite its history of use in foods and repeated positive safety determinations by regulatory authorities worldwide. Upholding the NOSB's vote and removing carrageenan from organic foods based on flawed arguments would have set a bad precedent for reviews of future organic materials and could have led to a drastic reduction in the options organic formulators have to make innovative products that meet consumer expectations and continue to grow the organic market.

IFAC strongly supports USDA's sound, science-based decision to keep carrageenan in organic foods and, by doing so, avoid setting a dangerous precedent of delisting additives based on a perceived lack of essentiality. IFAC and its members will continue to work with regulators and the food industry to provide accurate and high quality scientific evidence to support the use of ingredients in organic food.

### **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.