

Focus on Stevia

10 November 2011

Stevia rebaudiana Bertonii, commonly known as stevia, is a plant that has been used for centuries by natives of South America as a traditional sweetener, added to herbal teas and other beverages.

Stevia leaves contain natural sweeteners, called steviol glycosides. The two main sweet-tasting components are stevioside and rebaudioside A, which are up to 300 times sweeter than sugar and therefore they can be used to sweeten food without providing calories. Steviol glycosides offer the additional appeal that they are entirely of plant origin, just like sugar.

Stevia-based sweeteners have been used for decades in many countries around the world. The safety of steviol glycosides has been established based on stevia's long history of use, and numerous safety studies.

In April 2010 the European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA) scientific Panel on additives assessed the safety of steviol glycosides and established an Acceptable Daily Intake (ADI) of 4 mg per kg body weight per day for steviol glycosides. On 11 November 2011 the European Union granted final regulatory approval for the use of stevia extracts in foods and beverages.

Below, find shortcuts to EUFIC materials on this topic:

EUFIC podcast: An introduction to the sweetener stevia and a description of its evaluation by EFSA

In the first part of this podcast Dr. Ashley Roberts (Vice President of Food & Nutrition, Cantox Health Sciences International), provides an introduction to stevia and steviol glycosides. In the second part of the podcast, Dr. John Christian Larsen (Technical University of Denmark and Division of Toxicology and Risk Assessment at the Danish National Food Institute), chairman of the EFSA panel on additives, provides an overview of the risk assessment process with a focus on the opinion on steviol glycosides.

EUFIC Food Today No.69 (10/2009). [Stevia: a natural sweetener with potential](#)

[EUFIC Q&A on Stevia](#)

For more information:

- [Official Journal of the European Union L295, 12 November 2011, Volume 54, Page 207 \(Commission Regulation \(EU\) No 1131/2011 of 11 November 2011 amending Annex II to Regulation \(EC\) No 1333/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council with regard to steviol glycosides\)](#)

• [EFSA Scientific Opinion on the safety of steviol glycosides for the proposed uses as food additives \(March 2010\)](#)

• [EFSA Panel on additives assessment for steviol glycosides for the proposed uses as food additives \(October 2011\)](#)

• [Opinion of the European Food Safety Authority on a Commission proposal for the use of stevia and extracts of stevia \(October 2010\)](#)

• [Opinion of the European Food Safety Authority on a draft regulation concerning the use of stevia as a food additive in food for human consumption \(December 2009\)](#)



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