

## **POSITION STATEMENT ON THE SAFETY OF CARRAGEENAN AND PROCESSED EUCHEUMA SEAWEED**

Marinalg International is a world association representing the producers of hydrocolloids extracted from seaweeds.

The safety of carrageenan and Processed Eucheuma Seaweed for use in foods was confirmed at the fifty-seventh meeting of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) in Rome in June 2001. The JECFA recommended an Acceptable Daily Intake of "not specified", the most favorable ADI a food additive can get. This is significant since the JECFA review was based on extensive safety studies.

The Codex Alimentarius was created by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Health Organization (WHO) to set standards, guidelines and principles on matters pertaining to food including food safety and food additives. The JECFA is an independent international panel of expert toxicologists. They review data and develop expert opinions and recommendations pertaining to food additives and contaminants at the request of the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants (a Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission) or by a member country of the Codex process.

The safety of carrageenan and Processed Eucheuma Seaweed for use in foods was subject of the fifty-seventh meeting of the JECFA in Rome in June 2001. The JECFA recommended an Acceptable Daily Intake of "not specified", and confirmed thus the most favourable status a food additive can get. The decision of JECFA was based on a review of extensive safety studies concerning issues such as the potential for carrageenan and Processed Eucheuma Seaweed to induce cell proliferation and tumor promotion in the colon. Samuel Cohen M.D., Ph. D. (Chairman of the Department of Pathology/Microbiology from the Medical School at the University of Nebraska) and Dr. Nobuyuki Ito (Professor Emeritus from Nagoya City University Medical School, Japan), both experts on cancer, performed a valuable, scientifically critical literature review and prepared a response on the matter to the JECFA.

The position of the JECFA is also supported by a very recent Japanese publication showing that Carrageenan has no tumor promoting effect (*J. Toxicol. Pathol.*, 14(1), 37-43, 2001).

**The recent decision of JECFA to establish an ADI of "not specified" for carrageenan and Processed Eucheuma Seaweed is the best possible classification from a toxicological point of view.**

It means, that there is no numerical limit established on the consumption of carrageenan and Processed Eucheuma Seaweed when used in food at a level to achieve the desired technical or functional effect.

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The JECFA evaluation may not be published until 2003. The Drs Cohen and Ito response that was reviewed by the JECFA has been published in Critical Reviews in Toxicology, 32(5):413-444 (2002).

For your convenience, you will find below a copy of the Summary and Conclusions of the fifty-seventh meeting of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives - Rome - 5-14 June 2001

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### **JOINT FAO/WHO EXPERT COMMITTEE ON FOOD ADDITIVES FIFTY-SEVENTH MEETING ROME, 5-14 JUNE 2001**

#### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

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#### **Food additives evaluated toxicologically**

Thickening agents :CarrageenanProcessed Eucheuma Seaweed	ADI "not specified"* (group ADI for carrageenan and Processed Eucheuma Seaweed)
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\* ADI "not specified" is used to refer to a food substance of very low toxicity which, on the basis of the available data (chemical, biochemical, toxicological and other) and the total dietary intake of the substance arising from its use at the levels necessary to achieve the desired effects and from its acceptable background levels in food, does not, in the opinion of the Committee represent a hazard for health. For that reason, and for the reasons stated in the individual evaluations, the establishment of an ADI expressed in numerical form is not deemed necessary. An additive meeting this criterion must be used within the bounds of good manufacturing practice, i.e. it should be technologically efficacious and should be used at the lowest level necessary to achieve this effect, it should not conceal food of inferior quality or adulterated food, and it should not create a nutritional imbalance.

*"Position statement on the safety of carrageenan and PES on the same subject of the  
International Food Additives Council"*

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