

POSITION STATEMENT ON CARRAGEENAN AND SEMICARBAZIDE (SEM) EC alert notification 2003/201

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

The above rapid alert notification concerns the possible detection of semicarbazide (SEM) in carrageenan and seaweed. In animal tissues SEM has been identified as a metabolite of nitrofurazone, which is one of the nitrofurans. Nitrofurans are banned animal antibiotics. It should be emphasized that nitrofurans was not found in any of the seaweed or carrageenan samples.

Marinalg International confirms that neither nitrofurans nor its metabolites are used at any stage of growth of the seaweed, or during the carrageenan manufacturing process.

Marinalg International is actively investigating why SEM may have been detected in seaweeds and carrageenan. It has been suggested that SEM can indeed be naturally present in the seaweeds rather than arising from contamination with nitrofurans and/or its derivatives. The fact that SEM also happens to be a metabolite of nitrofurans appears to be unrelated to its possible presence in carrageenan*.

Furthermore, current analytical methods were developed and validated for the detection of nitrofurans metabolites in animal tissues only ; they have not been validated in respect of detection of SEM in plant tissues.

Marinalg International will continue to co-operate fully with the relevant Authorities to resolve the matter.

** EFSA advice of July 28, 2003 - AFC/adhoc SEM/1*