

7
INSTITUTE OF SHORTENING AND EDIBLE OILS, INC.

1750 NEW YORK AVENUE, N.W.

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006

TELEPHONE (202) 783-7860

FACSIMILE (202) 393-1367

May 11, 2000

00-041N

00-041N-7

Robert M. Reeves

Mr. Charles W. Cooper
International Activities Staff (HFS-585)
Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition
U.S. Food & Drug Administration
200 C Street, SW
Washington, DC 20204

Dear Bill:

The Institute of Shortening and Edible Oils (ISEO) is pleased to comment on a matter to come before the Eighteenth Session of the Codex Committee on Cocoa Products and Chocolate (CCCPC) to be held November 2-4, 2000 in Bern, Switzerland.

The ISEO strongly supports changing the current standard for chocolate and chocolate products to allow the inclusion of vegetable fats other than cocoa butter up to 5% of the finished product.

The issue of substituting vegetable fats other than cocoa butter in chocolate and chocolate products has been a contentious one ever since a directive proposing same was proposed in the European Commission in 1973 (Council Directive 73/241/EEC). The argument given in support of such changes basically challenged the appropriateness of a very prescriptive international standard for a product having significant variation in terms of composition, functionality and cultural acceptance. Strict adherence to such a standard poses significant trade barriers to many countries importing or exporting chocolate and chocolate products.

The debate over whether to allow vegetable fats as substitutes for cocoa butter has been largely made within the European Commission, however, in recent years the issue has been considered in other fora such as the Codex Alimentarius Commission. ISEO understands that the European Union (EU) Parliament has recently approved a directive which will allow up to 5% replacement of cocoa butter in chocolate with certain vegetable oils. EU member states will now be required to incorporate the

0000113 FAX:01
RECEIVED
MAY 11 2000

Mr. Charles W. Cooper
May 11, 2000
Page Two

new directive into their respective national legislation within 36 months. ISEO supports this action taken by the European Union and believes a similar standard in Codex is appropriate.

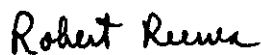
ISEO supports removing the brackets from the statement included under item 2.1 of the Proposed Draft Standard for Chocolate and Chocolate Products (at step 3) which reads as follows:

[The addition of vegetable fats other than cocoa butter shall not exceed 5% of the finished product, after deduction of the total weight of any other added edible foodstuffs, without reducing the minimum contents of cocoa materials.]

ISEO believes the standard for chocolate should be sufficient to preserve its basic compositional factors but not to the extent of precluding other ingredients which may be functionally equivalent (or superior) to more traditional components such as cocoa butter. Vegetable fats other than cocoa butter processed by modern technology may be easily used within chocolate products to provide excellent functionality and taste.

In summary, ISEO strongly supports the addition of vegetable fats other than cocoa butter up to 5% of finished product in chocolate and chocolate products within the CCCPC Proposed Draft Standard for Chocolate and Chocolate Products. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Robert M. Reeves
President