



THE SAFETY, REGULATION AND LABELLING OF PECTIN

Pectin is a natural fibre extracted from fruit, such as apples, oranges, lemons and limes. It has been used safely as an ingredient in recipes for many decades, by food companies and people cooking in their homes. Like all food and beverage ingredients, the use of pectin is strictly regulated all over the world. This means consumers can be confident that the pectin in the products they buy is high quality and has been produced safely. This factsheet provides an overview of some of the key regulations in place for pectin. It is not exhaustive, so always check locally first to ensure compliance.

GLOBAL STANDARDS

Pectin is recognized as safe for human consumption by the relevant Codex Alimentarius standard. Codex Alimentarius Commission, a body established by WHO and FAO to protect consumer health, sets global safety standards for food. Codex standards form the basis of food safety regulations all over the world.

Pectin is covered by the Codex General Standard for Food Additives, with no recommended maximum daily intake specified. Codex has also mandated its advisory scientific body (JECFA) to create a specification for pectin, which explains the standards that should be adhered to by companies that manufacture pectin ingredients.

E-NUMBERS EXPLAINED

In the European Union, pectin is approved for use in accordance with Regulation (EC) 1333/2008 on food additives.

Like all approved additives in the EU, pectin has an 'E' number – E440. An E number is commonly misunderstood to signify that an ingredient is artificial or even harmful. In fact, it simply means that it has been thoroughly tested and proven to be safe for human consumption.

It is not compulsory for food companies in the EU to use the E number for pectin on product labels. They are free to declare it simply as 'pectin'. This helps to communicate pectin's natural appeal in a way that is easy for consumers to understand.

GRAS IN THE USA

In the USA, pectin is classed as Generally Recognized As Safe (GRAS), which means it can be used freely in foods. The GRAS system is the responsibility of the US Food & Drug Administration (FDA), a government body.

Pectin has the highest level of approval (1) possible under the GRAS program, which means the FDA has no concerns over its use in food and beverage products.

Just like in the EU, food and beverage companies in the USA are free to declare pectin on the label simply as 'pectin', highlighting its natural appeal.

CHINA

The use of pectin in China is controlled by Regulation GB2760-2014, which states that there are no maximum usage levels for pectin and that it can be used freely in foods.

PECTIN IN ORGANIC PRODUCTS

Organically-produced pectin is not currently available in the quantity needed by organic food companies. As a result, regulators can take a flexible approach on the use of non-organic pectin in organic products.

In the USA, the rules state that organic certified pectin should be used whenever possible. However, if none is available, companies may use non-organic pectin in organic products, provided the pectin is non-amidated.

In the EU, food companies may use non-organic pectin in plant and milk-based products labelled as organic, provided the pectin is in the non-amidated form.

As always, it is important to check local regulations first to ensure compliance.

IPPA STANDARDS

Pectin manufacturers take safety seriously and IPPA has also published its own pectin specifications and guidelines, as well as a Material Safety Data Sheet, which IPPA members must respect.