



## TARTRAZINE

Tartrazine has been the subject of a considerable amount of publicity over the years. Much of the information given on the subject in the media has been either inaccurate or exaggerated and consumers have, as a result, become misinformed and confused. A group of consumers now exist who believe, quite erroneously, that the consumption of products containing Tartrazine will have long term harmful effects. Irresponsible commercial campaigns have also misled consumers into believing that Tartrazine is harmful to the population in general. The South African Association for Food Science and Technology (SAAFoST) therefore wishes to publish a position statement on this matter to provide factual information to interested parties.

Tartrazine is a yellow food colourant which has been used for many years, however, it has been found to produce intolerant reactions in a few individuals. Some of the cases of adverse reactions have been related to its use in pharmaceutical preparations. Tartrazine intolerance has been estimated to affect between one and ten people in every ten thousand (between 0.01% and 0.1% of the population).

The adverse reactions which have been reported include urticaria (allergic skin rash), rhinitis (runny nose), asthma, purpura (purplish skin bruising) and systemic anaphylaxis (shock). The adverse reaction is more common in asthmatics and people who are sensitive to aspirin.

The question of intolerance to Tartrazine should be seen against a background of food intolerance, allergy and hypersensitivity in general. The incidence of intolerance to foods containing milk, wheat, rye and their derivatives, is very much higher than intolerance to foods containing Tartrazine and other food additives. In the same way as milk, wheat and rye products pose no threat to the vast majority of people, so Tartrazine containing products are entirely safe for more than 99.9% of the population. Those few who are intolerant are protected by South African food regulations which require that the Tartrazine in a product must be declared by name on the label, in the list of ingredients.

The use of Tartrazine has been reviewed by the Joint FAO/WHO (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations / World Health Organisation) Expert Committee on Food Additives and Acceptable Daily Intake of up to 7.5 mg/kg of body weight has been established. In the USA and the UK, estimates of the actual intake per head, carried out by the National Academy of Sciences in conjunction with the National Research Council in 1979 and the FACC in 1979, are well below these levels. In the United Kingdom the Food Advisory Committee, in their final report on food colours (1987), does not take the view that the rare cases of allergy or hypersensitivity to certain food colours constitute

valid grounds for restricting their use. The use of Tartrazine in fact is permitted in most countries including the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Germany, Japan and Holland.

**SUMMARY:**

SAAFoST appreciates that a small percent of the population (up to 0.1%) could be sensitive to Tartrazine. It therefore supports not only product labelling but also any responsible effort that is made to provide scientifically correct information to the consumer about Tartrazine.

**DATE OF REISSUE:** September 2002