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EU RECOGNISES BIOFUELS STANDARDS

The European Union has recognised the standard and certification system of the Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels (RSB) – see TOS issue 121 for more information. – as a way to demonstrate and document compliance with the EU biofuels directives.

Biofuels entering the EU market must demonstrate environmental benefits compared to fossil fuels in order to count toward the mandate established under the Renewable Energy Directive (2009/28/EC). Qualifying biofuels feedstocks must avoid harm to land with high biodiversity value or high carbon stock. In addition, biofuels must demonstrate a 35% saving in greenhouse gas emissions compared to fossil fuels.

The Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels is a multi-stakeholder initiative hosted by the Energy Center of Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL), that has developed a global sustainability standard and certification system for biofuel production.

Source: Press release RSB 19 July 2011

Gluten-free certification scheme in the US

Celiac is an autoimmune condition affecting people of all ages. When sufferers eat food containing gluten, even small amounts, a toxic reaction occurs that damages the small intestine and does not allow food to be properly absorbed. Gluten is the common name for proteins found in all forms of wheat and other grains such as rye, barley and triticale. There is no cure, and the only solution is to eliminate gluten completely from the diet.

In the US, Quality Assurance International (QAI) and the healthcare non-profit National Foundation for Celiac Awareness (NFCA) are jointly launching a certification programme for gluten-free products: the QAI Gluten-Free Certification. The partnership seeks to combine QAI's experience and resources in conducting certification and testing and the NFCA's years of advocacy work on behalf of celiac disease sufferers.

The QAI Gluten-Free Certification programme and consumer label was officially presented to the US food industry last month (June) at the KeHE Show in Chicago. Being so early in the life of the new scheme there are no products certified to this scheme on the market yet, but many applicants are in the process of certification. It is expected that the new Gluten-free logo will be on the shop shelves by the end of this year.

The QAI Gluten-Free Certification programme is applicable for food producers and manufacturers of gluten-

free products. The programme verifies the safe production, storage and transportation of gluten-free products. The type of applicants received so far vary, some are companies already making claims on gluten-free in their labels and others are newcomers that appreciate the chance to combine organic, food safety and gluten-free certification, a service that the certification body offers.

How label gluten-free claims are sustained in non-certified products

When products that are not certified make gluten-free claims, often it is the processor themselves that is making the claim. Sometimes manufacturers do their own internal routine testing. Other times, gluten-free claims on labels are not substantiated by any testing. Some manufacturers believe that if their ingredients do not specifically contain gluten, then their product is gluten-free.

The challenge that gluten-free shoppers have with this type of

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TEMPORARY VARIANCE GRANTED IN US STATE

Due to extreme climate conditions in New Mexico State in the US, the New Mexico Organic Commodity Commission has requested a temporary variance from requirements §205.237(c) (1,2) and 205.239(a)(2), which concern dry matter intake from pasture grazing. After evaluating the request NOP has granted the variance to producers using non-irrigated pasture in eight New Mexico counties. Producers having access to irrigated pasture are not included in the variance. ■

Source: NOP

EU / Non EU

When the EU organic logo is used on products, labelling must include a declaration of the origin of the raw materials, using one of the following terms: 'EU agriculture', 'Non-EU agriculture' or 'EU/non-EU agriculture'.

However, up to 2% (by weight) of the total quantity of the agricultural ingredients can be discounted. So if 98% of the ingredients were farmed in the EU and 2% were farmed outside the EU, labelling can declare the origin as EU Agriculture. ■

Source: Soil Association Certification Ltd., Certification News, Spring 2011

label claim is that while a product's label may not make reference to a gluten-containing ingredient, without third-party testing and inspection, a shopper cannot be sure that contamination by those ingredients did not take place during the manufacturing process.

According to Packaged Facts research, 17 million households in the USA purchase gluten-free foods, and the market is increasing: Gluten-free sales reached more than \$2.6 billion by the end of 2010 and are now expected to exceed more than \$5 billion by 2015. In this scenario, NFCA's goal is to promote affordability, accessibility, safety, taste and understanding of gluten-free foods. By partnering with QAI, NFCA seeks to dramatically increase the number of companies that provide consumers with the added measure of trust they seek through third party verification.

QAI Gluten-Free Certification

The gluten-free certification programme conducted by QAI follows similar procedures to organic certification/inspection: after the application is received, it becomes a document review and desk audit to examine the operator's plan and profile, followed by an onsite inspection, certification; and a renewal of the process is conducted annually.

However, an extra step is added to the usual procedures in organic certification. An integral component of a high-quality gluten-free system is that the QAI Gluten-Free Certification programme requires systematic testing of all ingredients as well as the final product. At every on-site inspec-

tion, the inspector must collect a random sample, which is tested to ensure gluten-free integrity at 10 ppm or less. The QAI Certification Programme does additional independent testing by a third-party to truly validate those claims.

Operators certified by QAI can combine the gluten-free certification with other certification services provided by QAI. For example, other certifications could include the organic USDA National Organic Program certification, and other food safety certifications such as Safe Quality Foods (SQF) and the British Retail Consortium (BRC).

Any governmental involvement?

The FDA has been working on a definition for 'gluten-free' for some time and, ideally, a time will come when there will be a federal law governing the production and labelling of gluten-free foods. Until that happens, the QAI Certification Programme offers the tools that companies need to take to prove they took extra assurance steps. The QAI Gluten-free Certification Programme was developed using the proposed Food and Drug Administration (FDA) definition and World Health Organisation (WHO) standards as guidance. ■

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Sources:

Interviews with Jaclyn Bowen, QAI General Manager and Jennifer North, Vice President of NFCA.

For further information see:

QAI website: www.qai-inc.com/services/gluten_free.asp
NFCA website: www.celiaccentral.org/

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